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THE MEMOIRS
OF
RAYMOND POINCARÉ

Raymond Poincaré

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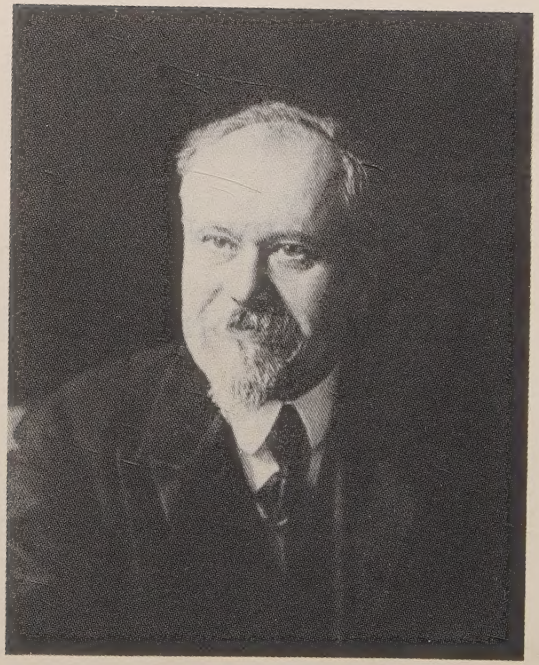

R. Poincaré

1912.

THE MEMOIRS

OF

RAYMOND POINCARÉ

(1912)

TRANSLATED AND ADAPTED BY

SIR GEORGE ARTHUR

WITH A PREFACE BY

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PREFACE

THE present generation is living too close to the events of the last fifteen years—perhaps the most momentous period in the world's history—to see them in their true perspective, and most of the books which have been written by those who participated in those events deal only with particular aspects or phases of them. M. Poincaré's Memoirs are of an altogether different character, and will be of inestimable value to those who wish to survey the great drama of the War as a whole in its prelude, its progress, and its consequences. There is no other statesman in Europe who could have undertaken such a task with any prospect of success, for he alone has the distinction of having presided over the destinies of one of the Great Powers not only during the War but in the periods immediately preceding and following it. Not only, therefore, does he possess an unrivalled knowledge of the events with which he deals, but he has qualifications for interpreting them which no other living man possesses, simply because he suffers from none of the limitations of the diplomatist, the soldier, or the politician. As the head of the State he is above and outside all sectional points of view; his only limitation is the point of view of France.

There are of course some people in this country to whom even so wide an outlook as this seems narrow. To those who put some vague ideal of universal peace before the safety and welfare of their own country, who live in a world of their own imagining, who declared before the War that

such a disaster was unthinkable, who regarded it when it came as an unfortunate accident which impeded but did not falsify their aspirations, and who saw in peace merely renewed opportunities for self-delusion—to such the personality of M. Poincaré may be unsympathetic. He is a realist who sees facts as they are. He saw the danger in which his country stood, he framed his policy to meet it, he succeeded in his task, and thereby raised France to a pinnacle of true greatness such as she had not known before. What other statesman of our epoch has shown so just a view of the world situation and of the steps required to deal with it? What other statesman's policy will bear comparison with his in its simplicity, its consistency, the determination with which it has been pursued, and the measure of its success?

It is true that the attitude assumed by France towards Germany in the post-war period—an attitude for which M. Poincaré is perhaps more responsible than any other French statesman—has met with much criticism in this country. Did he appreciate the situation less truly after the War than before and during it? The truth is that he has always seen in Pan-Germanism and Bolshevism what his superficial critics have never been able to see—the greatest peril which the civilisation of the West has ever confronted, enemies with whom no compromise was possible. And if he was unable to perceive how the rôle of the judge who condemns and punishes can be reconciled with that of the creditor who forgives his debtor, how the humiliation and disarmament of an enemy are compatible with pardon and with friendship, and how a Power which declares war on civilisation can be admitted to the comity of nations—perhaps after all this only argues common sense.

When the history of this age is written and the time comes for the work of every actor upon this mighty stage to be appraised, it will be seen that he was one of the few who

built upon the rock while multitudes were building on the sand, because he faced facts while others evaded them; and when the mists which now obscure our vision in regard to the events of our own time have rolled away, there is no doubt that France will enrol him among the greatest and most far-sighted of her statesmen as well as the most devoted of her servants. It is equally certain that in the history of our own country his name will stand as peculiarly representative of that policy which united the two nations in defence of Western civilisation against the most formidable foe in the whole of their annals, who was of all foreign statesmen the most consistent and the firmest of our friends, and that one to whom we owe the deepest debt of gratitude.

It only remains to congratulate M. Poincaré on having obtained so able a translator as Sir George Arthur. To translate a French book so that one cannot tell that it is a translation is a feat which has been accomplished in this instance but in very few others.

NORTHUMBERLAND.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The succeeding volumes will deal with the Presidency of M. Poincaré immediately before, and during, the War, and with his Premiership afterwards.

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CHAPTER I

After the Franco-German Treaty of 4th November 1911—Incident in the Senatorial Commission—Resignation of Caillaux Cabinet—Formation of the new Ministry—Programme of Peace and Union—Greeting by Press and public opinion—Government before the Chambre.

TOWARDS the end of 1911 a Commission of Senators was appointed to examine the two Treaties regarding Morocco and the Congo,[1] which early in November had been signed by France and Germany. The Commission, consisting of twenty-six members, included most of the former Prime Ministers and Ministers for Foreign Affairs who sat in the Senate, a few diplomatists of distinction, and a little group of men of lesser importance, of whom I was one; for our President we unanimously chose Monsieur Léon Bourgeois. The anger aroused in France by the abrupt dispatch of the German gun-boat *Panther* to Agadir, the vagaries and obscurities which had marked the negotiations, the unexpected publication of the Agreement of the 3rd October 1904 with Spain (which appreciably discounted the advantages of the bond with Germany), the speeches delivered in a feverish Parliament by MM. Jaurès, Millerand, Paul Deschanel and the Comte de Mum, the self-imposed abstention of the deputies from the Eastern Departments, and the comments thereon from the Tribune, Parliamentary uneasiness and the growing conflict of opinions;—all these, among other, considerations forced on the Senate an inquiry as to events which in ten years had followed on one another's heels in Africa and had issued, after a very awkward crisis, in the Treaty of the 4th November 1911. M. Caillaux, the Prime Minister, and M. de Selves, the Minister for Foreign

[1] Only the second Treaty, dealing with cession of territories, required a vote of the Chambre, but the two measures had to be considered together.

Affairs, came forward as willing witnesses ; they expounded the policy which France had adopted since 1910 in regard to Morocco, with special reference to the honest attempt to ensure there the industrial and financial interests of Germany as well as of France ; they alluded to the stumbling-blocks in the way of any such combination ; they reminded us of what had actually brought about the expedition to Fez, and of the famous interviews at Kissingen between Herr Kiderlen-Wächter and the French Ambassador. Just before the New Year the Commission chose me for their *rapporteur*, and however disagreeable to find myself in sharp opposition to the deputies of the Est, I was bent upon the adoption of the Treaty. The statement these deputies put out on the 20th November was—as they frankly admitted—pieced together in the course of the debates. They overlooked no jot—so they said—of the patriotic efforts which marked the negotiations, nor of the tangible results obviously secured ; they were wholly against any policy of aggression, but they would not, by ratifying the Convention, subscribe to any sort of agreement which might hurt the feelings of Alsace-Lorraine. It seemed a little odd that they should have consulted neither Monsieur Le Brun, deputy for Meurthe and Moselle, who as Colonial Minister had handled the preparation of the Treaty, nor myself, who as Senator for the Meuse had for many years been outside the Palais Bourbon. M. Le Brun, who was both hurt and surprised, had difficulty that day in curbing his feelings and keeping quiet in his seat ; to me it was simply unthinkable that any one could read into either the Agreement of the 4th November 1911, or that of the 8th February 1909, any approbation of the violence done by the Treaty of Frankfort to the peoples torn from France. In all the Governments of which I had been a member—in 1893 and 1895, no less than in 1906—I had endorsed any special agreements with Germany, and it certainly never occurred to me that national loyalty, which rightly forbade us to forget 1870, imposed on us a thick and thin hostility against a neighbouring nation whenever and wherever international questions might be at issue.

I got to work at once, and by the time the New Year's

holidays were over I had digested the ponderous documents which the Government put into my hands, I had weighed and re-weighed for myself all the pros and cons, I had enjoyed some long talks with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, and as a result of all this could whole-heartedly recommend my colleagues to ratify the Treaty. On the 9th January 1912 the Commission reassembled at the Luxembourg Palace; M. Caillaux and M. de Selves were again in attendance, and the Foreign Minister handed over to us a large file of important papers, and outlined in a long note what had happened since the appearance of the *Panther* before Agadir. When he had finished his story, our President asked if any one wished to put any questions to either of the Ministers. M. Pichon asked why the proposed Consortium of N'Goko Sangha had fallen through and how—and why—the pourparlers regarding the Cameroon-Congo Railway had been first started and then dropped. In reply to this double—and thorny—question, the Prime Minister coolly rehearsed the pourparlers of the last months, and left on us the impression that since Algeciras we had been up to our neck in Moroccan difficulties, and had not always been immune from mistakes; that after conferring with England and Spain, and giving our signature at Algeciras, we had thought ourselves without German rivalry in Morocco, and so had tried to come into line with her; that if we had gone a little too far ahead, we had quickly retraced our steps; that in fine the dispatch of a gun-boat to Agadir was a brutal reply to what was at worst a trifling lack of precision in our procedure. Caillaux's statement was so clear and so cogent as to dispose the Commission, almost to a man, to approve the Treaty, and it really looked as if the Cabinet, which had lately come in for a good deal of abuse, might be put upon its legs for a considerable time. Then the unfortunate occurred. Caillaux, perhaps a little carried away by the success he had just scored, went out of his way to tack on a few words as unnecessary as they were unasked for. "There has been some attempt", he blurted out, "in the Press and elsewhere, to put about that the negotiations were carried on outside the Foreign Office; I pledge my word that on no occasion has

there been any sort of political or financial dealing other than diplomatic and official conversations ".[1] This outburst gave something of an electric shock to the Commission, who of course were quite alive to current whispers against the Government. The Minister's rash utterance was wholly inexplicable. A few days earlier, Caillaux had spoken to me of some indiscreet gossip which he thought he could trace to the Quai D'Orsay. He knew perfectly well that outside advice had been offered by busybodies in the course of our discussions with Germany generally, and with Baron de Lanken in particular. He told me he had been obliged, as Prime Minister, to keep a sharp eye on proceedings, because the Foreign Minister was, as he thought, not always quite generous or just, and was sometimes a little off the correct line. He then put me this question : " If the Commission should examine me on this point, what shall I say ? " I advised him simply to say that as head of the Government he was directly responsible for the negotiations, that he consulted the persons he deemed desirable, and that all he had done had been done purely in the public interest. I told him that even if the Commission might not approve every detail of his action, they would not press unduly any questions and would rather be inclined to judge by results. Caillaux thanked me for my advice, and seemed ready to follow it ; yet here, without being asked a single question, or having his hand forced to particularise, he set a match to a matter which was anyhow only smouldering, and blazed out a contradiction of what had never even been asserted. M. Georges Clemenceau, sitting at the end of the table, had so far contained himself ; he now leapt to his feet and asked if the Foreign Minister would confirm the statement of the Prime Minister, and if there were not documents to show that our Ambassador in Berlin had complained of meddling by certain individuals in diplomatic arrangements. This twofold question in Clemenceau's strident tones sounded like two blows of a hatchet. There was a dead silence for a few moments, then the Commission turned

[1] Andre Tardieu, *Le Mystère d'Agadir*, etc. Pierre Albin, *Le Coup d'Agadir*, 1912, p. 327.

excitedly to M. de Selves, who, dragged opposite ways by a sense of duty, hesitated to reply. Caillaux seized that instant to try and answer for his colleague. But Clemenceau pulled him up very short. "My question", he drily said, "was put not to the Prime Minister but to the Minister for Foreign Affairs". The Foreign Minister, obviously very uncomfortable, screwed himself up to say a few words to the effect that he was always as anxious to speak the exact truth as to be guarded in his language; would the Commission, he asked, excuse him from a reply? The Commission would not have refused the request; the unwillingness to speak was in itself a perfectly transparent answer. But Clemenceau was determined to push home his advantage. "The Foreign Minister's reply", he said, "may satisfy the Members of the Commission, but it certainly does not satisfy me". As de Selves still kept silence, Clemenceau returned to the charge. "I repeat", he thundered out, "that the reply, or lack of reply, is entirely unsatisfactory, especially as confidences have been made which were neither asked for nor wanted". With great tact M. Léon Bourgeois managed to close the incident, and the meeting was adjourned to the next day, when I was asked to begin my report on the different items of the Treaty.

Before leaving the Luxembourg Palace, Caillaux asked Clemenceau and de Selves to come to the Ministers' private room, where apparently some winged words were exchanged. A few minutes later the rumour ran through the corridors of the Senate that the Foreign Minister was going to resign; the rumour was correct, and that evening de Selves told the President that he could no longer be responsible for a foreign policy in which there was neither consensus of opinion nor agreement as to action. Half an hour later, at a meeting of Ministers with M. Caillaux in the chair, it was agreed that the resignation of de Selves should be accepted, but that there should be no other secessions from office. Caillaux had his man in his mind, and early the next morning hurried to M. Delcassé and offered him the portfolio for Foreign Affairs which had been knocked out of his hands by a blow aimed from Berlin. M. Delcassé asked if he might think

it over, but the Prime Minister, feeling sure that he would say "yes", came to my house and proposed, with many pretty phrases, that I should succeed Delcassé as Minister for Marine. He was aware that I had looked a little askance at some of the provisions of the Treaty, but was sure that I intended to endorse it as a whole. Our personal relations had always been very friendly, and he had praised me for an article in which I backed up the Government in their negotiations; I had no personal reason for refusing his offer, but I was without any experience to equip me for the direction of naval affairs. Caillaux was too polite to let me see that he was equally aware of my technical ignorance, but he saw that I was not actuated by any false modesty, and he just shook my hand and dashed off. A few hours later, while the Commission was poring over the Treaty, we heard that Admiral Germinet to whom, on my refusal, the Portfolio for Marine was offered, had begged to be excused, and that the Prime Minister had received the same answer from one of our Commissioners, M. Pierre Baudin. Meanwhile, several deputies, more anxious about Delcassé's future than he seemed himself to be, had begged him not to reembark in a Cabinet which was the reverse of safe. The Ministers, some of them a little bewildered, met that evening in the Prime Minister's room, and after a rather stormy discussion agreed upon a statement for the Press which, hungry for news, was momentarily expecting to hear of a reconstruction of the Government. The communiqué was to the effect that owing to the difficulty in providing for the administration of the Admiralty, and the immediate necessity of filling the vacancy, the Prime Minister felt himself unable to carry on the Government. The wording rather suggested that Delcassé, despite the warning of his friends, was ready to go to the Quai D'Orsay, and that Caillaux, knowing the full value of his colleague, was quite prepared to translate the Minister of Marine to the Foreign Office, as he did not think him then capable of troubling the peace of Europe. The next day, while the President was conferring with the two Parliamentary leaders, the Commission sat again, and the political crisis was of course on every lip.

Clemenceau, who had turned out many Governments, told us that he wanted a Poincaré ministry. "In order to upset it!" I laughingly said. "No; so that I can support it", was the answer. Sure enough, twenty-four hours later, the President summoned me to the Élysée, and after his usual cordial greeting, disclosed the actual situation. He seemed fairly happy about the present state of affairs, and not particularly nervous about the future; he consulted me as to the formation of a Cabinet, and when I advised him to send for M. Bourgeois, he said that M. Bourgeois would certainly beg to be excused, and that they both believed I was the best person to come to the rescue. I told M. Fallière that I was honestly surprised he should have selected me, but that I had no right to give him an off-hand refusal, and I reminded him that six years earlier, during the negotiations of Algeciras, he had asked me to construct a Cabinet, and that I had then felt myself unable to do so. I remembered also how for two days M. Bourgeois and I had discussed with M. Sarrien which of us would be the better man to deal with existing conditions, and that we had told Sarrien he ought to be Prime Minister. The notion did not appeal to him nor to me, but he felt that given the circumstances he ought not to refuse office. I now pleaded for one day in which to consult some friends, promising a definite reply the next morning; this would give me time to ask both Bourgeois and Delcassé whether either would accept the leadership with the assurance of my entire support for either of them. I first tried Léon Bourgeois, whom I had known for many years, and with whom, in the agony of the Great War, I was to be brought into closest friendship. I had served very happily with him in the Government of 1906, when he was Foreign Minister and I was Minister for Finance, and we had always seen eye to eye on points which affected the permanent interest of our country. He had represented France at The Hague conferences of 1899 and 1907, and he was the personification of international justice. No better statesman could be found to make clear to the world at large that we were labouring for peace, and I now entreated

him to take the reins. He told me this was out of the question for reasons of health, as he had not been at all well, and had promised his doctor to go easy for the time.

This was of course final, and I betook myself to Delcassé, who, after his withdrawal from office, had kept a long and dignified silence. For three years his voice was not heard in Parliament, but it was his brilliant speech in July 1909 which brought about the fall of the Clemenceau Government, and two years later, M. Monis had asked him to take over the Ministry of Marine where Caillaux, on coming back into power, begged him to stay. In the difficult months which ensued, Delcassé was the arch-apostle of prudence and moderation, and it was he who begged the Government not to send a man-of-war to Mogador by way of retaliation for the insult of the *Panther*. For an hour I argued with him; his oratory, he said, was quite inadequate to do justice to a Prime Minister's rôle in Parliament. I suggested he should double the parts of Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, as I thought it very advisable that the Head of the Government should be at the Quai D'Orsay. He shook his head to this also, and it was only out of personal regard for myself, and on condition of my leaving his friend M. Pams at the Ministry of Agriculture, that he even consented to remain at the Admiralty.

The die was apparently cast, but next morning I felt a little depressed at having to give up my regular work, and more than a little anxious as to my new responsibilities when, at the Élysée, I agreed to form a Government. I was clear in my mind about one thing: that my Cabinet must hold only men of real worth and ripe experience, and I took comfort in the thought that the Treaty with Germany, whatever its shortcomings, would make for the peace of Europe. The first thing was to form a Government, and to form it as quickly as possible. Whom should I invite? Clemenceau was an outstanding figure; he had always been more than kindly disposed to me, and had even asked me to serve as his Foreign Minister, but I could not flatter myself that so prepotent a personage would submit to any sort of discipline in any other Cabinet than his own. I remembered

his heated recriminations with Bourgeois, and his restlessness even under the gentle hand of Sarrien ; I knew him as an individualist so exaggerated that he peremptorily refused the tentative offer of the famous dramatist, M. Paul Hervieux and myself, to put him up for the Academy, on the rather far-fetched plea that membership of any society might cut across his fidelity to himself. Clemenceau was also opposed to the measure of electoral reform which the Chambre had favoured, and which I did not think could be jettisoned ; above all, he was very shaky about the Treaty, and to throw overboard the Treaty would have been to imperil the peace of Europe.

I must first hunt up Alexandre Millerand, and I found him in his apartment in the Avenue de Villars. We had been friends almost since childhood, and our divergent political paths had done nothing to mar our affection for one another. No one admired more than I did his breezy optimism, his love of work, his inflexibility of purpose, the last very evident during the railway strike of 1910 when, as Minister for Public Works, he proved himself possessed of an iron will. Like Delcassé, Millerand would have preferred—and he said so—the Foreign Office, but when he accepted the Ministry for War, I knew that I had matched a man with an opportunity, and that his powers of organisation, his energy and industry, would have full scope. My next call was on Briand, whom I knew only slightly, as he came to the Chambre just as I was moving on to the Senate, and except for a brief time together in the Sarrien Government, we had only met at long intervals. Briand had remained in the Clemenceau Ministry, from which I had shut myself out, and had then formed successively two Governments of his own, resigning on a motion as to the Concordat. At one time his quasi-revolutionary speeches had rather shocked the army and a little scared the middle classes ; ten years, however, had passed since then, and many things had happened ; the army had forgotten the episode, and the middle classes had forgiven the man, as they are always ready to forgive any man, even if he has threatened them,

so long as they think him capable of defending them. Briand had been the champion and the eloquent spokesman of the separation between Church and State, thus obtaining full sway over the party of the Left; then in the autumn of 1909 he had made a very conciliatory speech at Périgueux which the Radicals had denounced as far too sugared, but which had brought him into high favour with the party of the Right. Each political party wanted to annex him, and he slipped through all their fingers with marvellous adroitness. His was the genius to diagnose the public temper, to scent a situation still far ahead, to smooth ruffled tempers, to conciliate, to adapt; when difficulties were thick, Briand as an adviser was peerless. He was out; a messenger went to fetch him, and meanwhile I got touch with M. Dupuy and M. Guist'hau. The moment Briand came in, I asked him to be the Minister for Justice: to this he demurred; the office would not give him the right to handle political questions, and he thought he would like the Ministry of the Interior. "But", I said, "the Keeper of the Seals is *ex-officio* the Vice-President of the Council, and in my Cabinet that will be no sinecure". M. Briand would only give his answer in the evening; his friend M. Guist'hau, on whom I pressed the Ministry of Education, had no personal objection to offer, but it was a case of Euryalus and Nisus, and I must wait for my Guist'hau till I can get my Briand. Dupuy, the Senator for the Hautes-Pyrénées, was happily much less coy, and I knew enough of his sturdy common-sense, as well as of his blameless public and private life, to feel quite happy in entrusting him with the Portfolio of Public Works. But the hesitation of Briand, and the humming and hawing of Guist'hau, was holding up my Cabinet-making. The best I could do was to give rendezvous at my house for the next day to all the men I designated for office—and more especially to M. Klotz, whom I wished to keep at the Exchequer, M. Lebrun, whom I destined for the Colonies, and M. Steeg, who had done so well with Education at the Rue de Grenelles, that I thought he might do even better in the Ministry of the Interior at the Place Beauvais.

Briand came as punctually as the others to our meeting, but still with his mind not made up. His friends had used all their powers of persuasion to hinder him from attending, but I myself assured him that he would be "in the know" of every political move; the recent ugly side-slip had shown how essential it was for a Prime Minister to take his colleagues into his inner confidence. There remained the Ministry of Commerce, and I thought at once of M. Viviani, our best speaker after Jean Jaurès, a hard worker, and a capital man of business. But Viviani, who would have jumped at the Ministry of Education, jibbed at the Ministry of Commerce. Just then we heard that the Radical Left was grumbling at not being represented in the new Cabinet. They were perfectly right; by an unpardonable lapse of memory I had forgotten the parliamentary groups and all they meant. Happily, one or two of the men who were with me knew exactly what to do, and at once sent for a list of the Left and pitched on M. Fernand David, an intelligent and thoroughly conscientious politician, who in years to come was to make good his name. For Under-Secretaries I wanted M. Morel for the Interior, M. Chaumet for the Post Office, M. Besnard[1] for the Exchequer, and M. Berand for the Fine Arts. The first three were easy, but oh! the trouble of getting Berand to say "yes". I was keen about this, as I knew that he was a "coming" man, a brilliant speaker, and as quick in an emergency as he was steady in routine. Finally, and figuratively, I took him by the throat and wrung from him an assent. So far so good; my places were all filled, but more important still was it to agree—and to agree quickly—on essential points. The first thing was so to federate the different political groups as to ensure the adoption of the Treaty by the Senate; the way would thus be paved for us—in all loyalty to our agreement with Spain—to assume our Protectorate in Morocco, and thus round off our African policy. The next considerations were to preserve genuinely peaceful relations with Germany, no less than with other Powers, and to cultivate diligently our alliance with Russia

[1] Later, Ambassador in Rome.

and our entente with England. At home there was much to be done; the administrative services must be regularised; there must be some measure of electoral reform to adjust representation in Parliament; complete religious liberty must be enjoined, and enjoyed in all schools and places of education; certain pressing social problems must be solved and healthy activities stimulated; the proposals for income-tax must receive the immediate attention of the Senate; and lastly, due economy must go hand in hand with the proper defence and true welfare of the nation. Every one agreed with me, and we arranged to meet the next afternoon, when I would have the declaration ready, and when we could tell the Press that the Cabinet had been formed, and formed for the first time in our history in a single day. The President, whom I saw early the following morning, said that his mind was relieved of a great weight, and that he was delighted with the team I had harnessed together; that afternoon at the Ministry of Marine—where Delcassé put his room at my disposal—my text was accepted without a dissentient word, and with the special approval of the clauses dealing with foreign affairs. This appeared in the *Officiel* of the 15th January; the Press was generally benevolent, and dubbed us "the Great Ministry", only one or two journalists being a little afraid that a Cabinet which contained so many first-class men might soon be at enmity within itself. I had the very friendliest words and gestures from the Corps Diplomatique, and nowhere was the new Government more warmly greeted than in London. The same note of congratulation was clearly sounded in the Press in Spain and Italy, nor could one find a single hostile word or the slightest sign of bad temper in any German paper, the agrarian *Deutsche Tagzeitung* amiably describing me as "thoughtful", and the *Berliner Tageblatt* venturing so far as to say that the Poincaré Cabinet could be received with nothing but favour in Germany.[1] The Commission sat that afternoon, and Bourgeois and I took our leave as President and *rapporteur*,

[1] The *Berliner Neuste Nachrichten* wrote: "The choice of M. Poincaré as President of the Council is received equally well here".

being replaced by M. Ribot and M. Baudin ; a few minutes later I came back into the room in my capacity of Foreign Minister, to give all the impetus I could to the promotion of the Treaty.

It was a full day. Besides the first Cabinet, which took place at the Élysée, I had to meet Parliament, and it was a little strange to find oneself back in the Chamber, after nearly six years' absence. My declaration was listened to without an adverse murmur, and most of the sentences were vociferously applauded, alike by Right, Centre, and Left. The usual notices had been given of interpolations, but only one—and that a very well-meant one—materialised, from M. Thierry Cazes, a deputy of the Midi. "Admiration has put the interpolators to silence", exclaimed that delightful socialist M. Manuel Sembat. I only had to say a few words in reply to M. Cazes, when I reminded him that my Government was composed of devotees to the public who were bound up with the laic policy and the supremacy of the Civil Power.

The Chambre passed a vote of confidence—proposed and seconded by Radical members—with only four dissentients. The party of the Right and the Socialists abstained: Painlevé, Caillaux and Viviani voted for our Government, which was evidently to be given a fair chance.

CHAPTER II

Seizure of the *Carthage*—Origin and consequences of the War in Tripoli—Fears of complications—Repercussions in Africa and the East—The *Manouba*—The *Tavignano*—Arbitration and friendly settlement—M. Tittoni and Leonardo da Vinci.

I WAS scarcely settled back in the Palais Bourbon when I found that, despite the Treaty of the 4th November, there were some surprises for us up the sleeve of Morocco. Events in Fez had echoed through Italy, and the Italian Government, at war with Turkey, was stringently policing the Mediterranean. On the 16th January our Consul at Cagliari telegraphed that a French postal boat, *Carthage*, had been stopped by Italian torpedo boats and ordered to follow them to Cagliari on the pretext that she had on board a French aviator with his machine. As a matter of fact, this aviator, M. Duval, was on his way to attend an Air Conference at Tunis, but the Italian authorities asserted that an aeroplane was contraband of war, and that M. Duval might be going to hand his machine over to the Turks. From end to end, one complication seemed to lead to another. The operations undertaken in Morocco under the Monis Government, the sinister incident at Agadir, the negotiations afoot between France and Germany in 1911, had combined with other happenings to stimulate Italy's appetite for colonial possessions. For some time past she had in imagination sliced off her strip of Mediterranean Africa, and had been specially covetous as to the territory which bordered Egypt and Tunis.

Was not Tripoli—who was about to resume her name of Ancient Libya—an ancient Imperial Province? Must not Italy enjoy again what the ages had bequeathed to her? How could the soil on which Berenice and Arsinoe,

Cyrenaica and Apollonia, had flourished belong to any other than the elder sons of Rome ?

Italian diplomatists, with their proverbial astuteness, had for long been paving the way for prospective operations, and had secured the benevolent regard of the European Powers. Signor Crispi had already told Lord Salisbury, in 1890, that as a set-off to the French occupation of Tunis, Italy would well serve British interests by occupying Tripoli. Lord Salisbury's reply was instinct with his habitual caution ; he knew that sooner or later, for better or worse, Italy would be in Tripoli, and that this would at any rate prevent the Mediterranean from becoming a French lake. But he thought that Italy should go slow ; the good sportsman, he suggested, will always keep his finger on the trigger until he can be sure of killing, and not wounding, his stag.[1] Lord Salisbury, of course, could scarcely say otherwise in view of the Mediterranean Agreement of 1887, under which Italy pledged herself—in case of any interruption of the *status quo*—to support England in Egypt, while England would do likewise to Italy in the sphere of Tripoli and Cyrenaica. Italy had, however, reserved the right to bring down her stag when she pleased, and England had no power to check her hand. Then in 1891, and again in 1902, the Triple Alliance Treaty, while expressing the theoretic hope that the *status quo* should be preserved on the septentrional coast of Africa, had foreseen the possibility of Italy establishing herself there, and had, conditionally, authorised her to do so. And before the ink was dry on the Agreement of 1902, Italy had secured a *sub rosa* promise from Vienna that the Imperial Government, having no interests to safeguard in Tripoli and Cyrenaica, would not cut across any Italian operations there. England, Germany, and Austria being thus "squared", it only remained for Italy to tell France that she would forgo any "say" in Morocco if we would be equally reticent in Tripoli, an understanding come to when, in 1902, Italian neutrality was guaranteed in the event of a

[1] For the antecedents and consequences of the Italo-Turkish War see *La Turquie, l'Allemagne et l'Europe*, by General M. Moukhtar Pasha, former Turkish Ambassador at Berlin.

German attack on France.[1] Finally in 1909, when the Tsar of Russia and the King of Italy met at Racconigi, an agreement was signed by the ministers in attendance : the text of this was carefully kept secret, and it was only with considerable difficulty that three years later I obtained some verbal information about it. Russia and Italy had then and there solemnly declared that they would do everything to preserve the *status quo* in the Balkans, and would jointly resist any encroachment ; a rider to this covenant set out that Italy would cast a favourable eye on Russian interests in the Narrows, while Russia would be equally complaisant regarding any Italian adventure in Tripoli and Cyrenaica.[2]

Rome could therefore have her mind easy as to all-round goodwill whenever she should decide to make a move ; yet with the first set-back to her arms in Africa, the German Press vociferated that Italy had been pushed into her campaign by France. Nothing could be more grotesquely untrue, for, as M. Barrère wrote to me,[3] neither our Ambassador nor any member of his staff had ever said a single word, even in private conversation, which could be twisted into the faintest encouragement for Italy to reach out to Tripoli. M. Barrère added : " No particular exercise of diplomacy was required for keeping off this subject ; it was all to our good to be on the friendliest terms with our neighbours on the Mediterranean, and if possible to have them alongside of us in the event of trouble with other Powers ; and meanwhile, to us—as to the Italians themselves—any realisation of Italian colonial aspirations seemed fairly remote. The celebration of independence did a good deal to warm up the Italian spirit, which was further stimulated in 1911 by the expedition to Fez and the Spanish movement to Larache and to El Ksar, but without a shadow of doubt it was the sudden appearance of Germany at Agadir which finally spurred Italy to her course. In some sense, therefore, it may fairly be said that if any Power were responsible for the Italian-Turkish war, that Power was Germany."

[1] Yellow Book, Franco-Italian Accords, 1900–2 (1920).
[2] Black Book. [3] 29th April 1912.

A rather curious conversation between the Russian and Italian Ambassadors in Paris in the autumn of 1911 corroborates Barrère's letter. M. Isvolsky asked how the allies of Italy would take it if she were to put her colonial designs into effect. M. Tittoni, in reply, had only to remind his colleague of what he had told him in confidence at Racconigi—that the Triple Alliance Convention had a clause under which Germany and Austria must give Italy a free hand in Tripoli. Isvolsky suggested that a war with Turkey would bring in one or other of the Balkan States, with the risk of a forward step from Austro-Hungary.[1] Tittoni had apparently no misgivings, and replied airily as to the engagements of Serbia, Russia and Bulgaria, but could not quiet the mind of the Russian diplomat, who on the 14/27th September wrote to his Government :

" I hear from M. Tittoni that the Italian Chargé d'Affaires at Constantinople has received instructions to announce that Italy is about to occupy Tripoli and to ask for an answer from the Turkish Government within twenty-four hours. M. Tittoni admits that—contrary to what he has previously said—the King and Giolitti asked for his advice before taking this step, and that after full consideration he assented to it. He asserts that Italy's move is the direct and inevitable consequence of Kiderlen's policy ; and that when Germany, oblivious of Algeciras, speeded up the French Protectorate of Morocco, and then demanded compensation, Italy could do nothing else than establish her rights in Tripoli."

Such, in some sort, was the train of events before I took office, and scarcely had the *Panther* cast anchor before Agadir when Signor Giolitti disposed himself to " realise " his country's dominant idea. The Italian pulse was for a while quickened by Austrian, scarcely less than by German, policy. The Treaty of Berlin had given a mandate to the Dual Empire to administer Bosnia and Herzegovina, but not heavy-handedly to annex them. So when Herr Bethmann-Hollweg told Jules Cambon that it was our example in Morocco which had propelled Italy towards Tripoli, our Ambassador reminded him of the seizure of Bosnia and

[1] Black Book ; cf. Siebert.

Herzegovina. "Oh, that was settled by Europe long before", was the retort. Cambon replied that Europe, with rather less than more prevision, might have opened a door to Austria, but had not asked her to sit down and occupy the house. "Between you and me that is precisely Marschall von Bieberstein's view", the Chancellor was obliged to admit; "he considers it a grave mistake that the Bosnian question was not definitely decided in a European Conference".[1]

The Austro-Hungarian *coup de main* had of course its repercussion in Italy where a jealous, as well as vigilant, eye was kept on the Balkan Peninsula.

On the 11th March 1908 Tittoni, then Foreign Minister, had announced in Parliament the plan of making a railway from the Danube to the coast of the Adriatic Sea, and his dismay was of a piece with his anger when, six months later, the annexation of two Slav provinces was suddenly announced. Feeling ran high in Rome against the house of Habsburg, and the surrender of the Sanjak of Novi-Bazar and the renunciation of Austria's right in Montenegro, were pooh-poohed as minor diplomatic successes, and did little to calm the feelings of a people which considered itself the trustee of Latin traditions. Now that the coast of the Adriatic was closed, the Italian Government set its face more and more to Africa, and nourished the hope of creating, with a cheap victory, an agreeable change of popular opinion.

When, in August and September 1911, Italy told the European Powers what she proposed to do, she represented herself simply as about to reap what she had sown. To do her justice, no one said her nay. True, Feld-Marcshall Hötzendorff,[2] a friend of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, wanted either to attack her or make her climb down. He wrote to Count Aehrenthal that Austria was far more

[1] The German Professor Foerster wrote of "the anti-European force which annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina without any preliminary understanding with the other European mandatories". Baron de Schoen himself recognised that the events of 1908–9 had for their sequel a very dangerous state of things (Schoen, *Erlebtes*).

[2] *Aus meiner Dienstzeit*, vol. ii. p. 174.

concerned with an Italian advent in Tripoli than Germany could be by the French in Morocco, but the Minister knew about his country's commitments, and was deaf to any suggestion of an appeal to the sword. Italy began by treading very delicately, and at Constantinople the Grand Vizier, Hakki Pasha, had no inkling of war, while the German Ambassador, Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, whose influence dominated the young Turks, professed to guarantee peace, and inspired such confidence that three battalions and a regiment of cavalry had been recalled from Tripoli. But the blunders and bluster of the Ottoman Government had given Italy quite sufficient cause to interfere. The Banco di Roma, which had founded at Tripoli and in the neighbourhood a group of industries—oil, soap, electrical installations and so forth—had found itself up against so much obstruction and ill-will on the part of Turkish officials that it seemed advisable to wind up all Italian business. Italians had been insulted and threatened in the ports, and things were at such a pass that on the 25th September the Italian Chargé d'Affaires drafted a note as to the serious danger to which Mussulman fanaticism was exposing the Italian colony. The Turkish Government at once offered economic guarantees; but the offer came too late, as the Giolitti Cabinet had already been swept along by public opinion. The newspapers harped on the Franco-German negotiations: France, it was urged, would have her hand quite free in Morocco, a licence which ought to be paid for; Italy surely had real claims to compensation. To the belated Turkish overtures Italy replied with a blunt ultimatum, in which she announced a military occupation of Tripoli. This bolt from the blue awoke even Hakki Pasha, who rained telegrams on Ambassadors and notes on European Powers, only to be advised, in reply, to give way as gracefully as he could.[1]

On the 30th September the *Giornale d' Italia* was moved to a glowing period. "We believe in our Fleet, and we are sure that the Mediterranean, which is a Roman-Venetian-Genoese-Sicilian Sea, will give a clear path to Tripoli for

[1] General Moukhtar Pasha.

our Army." The first days of the campaign flattered this spirit of optimism. In Libya there were only 4000 regular Turkish soldiers, with a mere handful of officers ; the whole lot at once left the coast to escape the gun-fire of the Italian warships and the Italian troops, in feverish enthusiasm, could camp unmolested on the seashore. The hope of the high Italian authorities was to set the Arabs against the Turks, but the hope was doomed to disappointment. The Arabs remained wholly faithful to Islam, and from Cyrenaica, as from Tripoli, they rallied to a man to the defence of the Turkish flag, while the young Turkish officers who were being trained in Germany found their way back to join up. Then began a campaign far bloodier and more exhausting for Italy than for the Sublime Porte. Turkey, however, found it no easy matter to send reinforcements to a remote province, and was prepared to concede to Italy a *de facto* authority if she could maintain a nominal sovereignty and be assured of all her religious privileges.

Early in November, however, Giolitti, under popular pressure, had suddenly proclaimed the annexation of Tripoli and Cyrenaica, where at the moment the Italian forces only held a few oases. Having thus burnt her boats, Italy must fight it out, and fight she did, with dogged courage. But victory was to elude her like a mirage, and Europe gradually became uncomfortable. On the 22nd October 1911 the Russian Foreign Minister telegraphed to their representative at the Quirinal that the German Ambassador at Constantinople had gloomily warned his Government that if Italo-Turkish hostilities were further protracted, war would certainly break out in the Balkans.[1] Thus from Morocco to Tripoli, and from Tripoli to the Balkan Peninsula, the fires began to flash which were eventually to blaze into a general conflagration. Italy must quickly have despaired of bringing Turkey to her knees in a rough-and-tumble fight in Africa, but before she had carried her arms to the Aegean sea—and thus increased the risk of a world-war—the dragging on of operations was making the European Powers more and more nervous.

[1] Siebert, p. 497.

France in particular had to walk warily, and to be very tender as regards Italian susceptibilities, for if the text of the 1902 Agreement had been locked away, the general sense of it was an open secret. Every Frenchman was sure that France's Latin sister would discountenance any German attack on us, and no one forgot that at Algeciras Visconti Venesta, the Italian plenipotentiary, had been deaf to some very improper importunities from Berlin, and had loyally backed us up. But on the other side the integrity of the Ottoman Empire was not only a highly respectable diplomatic dogma, solemnly attested and proclaimed at the Congresses of Berlin and Paris and the London Conference; it was also the great safeguard for French interests, moral and material, in the East, and a sound guarantee for peace and quiet. We were thus naturally anxious that the breach of peace caused by the expedition to Libya should be quickly closed up, and a term put to hostilities which filled us with anxiety. Such were the feelings which were fluttering France when the seizure of the *Carthage* drove both French and Italian temperatures up to fever point.

The Italian Ambassador came to see me on the 17th January, and employed all his conversational powers to try and justify the action of his Government. It would seem that in order to keep an eye on passengers to Tunis, Tittoni had established a sort of secret police in Marseilles. His nerves were evidently a good deal strained; one day he would say that ten Turkish officers had been reported as crossing the frontier from Tunis to Tripoli; another day he had been reliably informed that the French Government knew of aeroplanes being made in France for the Turkish army: to this latter we could reply that the Italian Government had placed an order for guns with Creusot, and had drawn upon Tunis for camels and corn. These details I did not know when I saw Tittoni, nor did I know that in December Rifaat Pasha, the Turkish Ambassador in Paris, had asked us to allow twenty-five members of the Red Crescent to pass through Tunis, that our consent had been given, that the list of these had been sent on the 5th February to France, and that these Turks, who carried identification

papers, were to embark at Marseilles on the *Manouba* for Sfax.

Tittoni, who was as subtle a diplomatist as he was a clever Parliamentarian, now assured me that a Marseilles-Tunis steamer had embarked twenty-nine Turkish officers. This seemed to me rather odd, but anyhow I could assure my informant that if the twenty-nine passengers really were Turkish officers they would never get to Tripoli, but would find themselves landed back in France; he took my word for this, and reminded me that under the Hague Convention a neutral Power was not responsible for individuals passing the frontier for military service, but could not let them pass in groups. Then in my turn I reminded Tittoni of our intense surprise about the *Carthage*, and told him that the matter would be immediately thrashed out in Rome by our Chargé d'Affaires, as our Ambassador, M. Barrère, was in Paris.

At the Cabinet meeting next morning, when we appointed a Committee to work out the details of our Moroccan Protectorate and at the Académie in the afternoon, when we admitted that very gifted poet, M. Henri de Régnier, I could not put Italy out of my mind. The Italian Government had positively assured M. Legrand that Duval had signed a contract with the Porte and that his machine was intended for the Turks at Tripoli; the aeroplane, they said, must be deposited at Cagliari; the boat could then proceed on its way and the question of responsibility could be dealt with later. Duval's father, hearing of the trouble, came of his own accord to the Foreign Office, and swore that his son had no notion of trading with belligerents, and that he had no other idea than to make some flights in Tunis and Egypt. I transmitted this at once to Rome, and renewed our protest.

The next day the *Carthage* was still in durance, and the *Manouba*, a boat in international pay, which was conveying the Red Crescent Mission and the mails, had been seized south of Sardinia and dragged to Cagliari under the same silly pretext that hospital orderlies were officers in disguise. This second outrage was a strong irritant both to Parliament and to Press, and the *Temps* was outspoken that here was no

question of an accident but an insult which would be resented as much in London as in Paris. When on the morrow the *Carthage* was let go, the *Manouba* was still detained. As if by chance my telegram, in which I insisted that the Red Crescent was immune from molestation, could not be deciphered, and had to be repeated; meanwhile, Rome reaffirmed that the passengers were officers.

At the Chambre that afternoon, where I had to speak on universal suffrage, members were incessantly urging me to say what I could about the French vessel, as to which notice of questions had been given. I could only tell them that I awaited further information, and hoped to make a full statement on the Monday. That week-end, Tittoni, suffering from a highly opportune attack of bronchitis, remained in bed and closed his doors; then, as nothing definite had been done, and as the deputies were growing more and more fretful, I decided to give what explanation I could. I told the story of the two occurrences very temperately, and emphasised the point that an aeroplane was not contraband of war which could be seized on a neutral vessel, and that as the *Carthage* was a postal boat she could only be searched, under the ruling of the Hague Conference, rapidly and courteously. As regards the *Manouba*, it was obvious that failing any *prima facie* fraud, the papers carried by the Turks must be accepted as correct unless proof could be produced to the contrary.

So far the Italian Government had only telegraphed that they could not renounce, in favour of France exclusively, the right of search which belligerent States enjoyed, but they had wrapped up this message with very polite expressions of regret, and with a request that we would take into consideration their immediate difficulties. I read the telegram to the Chambre, and I expressed myself confident that the incidents, however unfortunate, would do nothing to mar or maim relations founded on common and lofty traditions, on racial connection and on the solidarity of a mass of neutral interests. From London on 25th January Paul Cambon wrote to me: "Your speech has had an excellent effect here, and I have had many compliments on it. Every one is struck by the

unanimity of approval in France, where so often opinion is sharply divided." [1]

If I dwell on these details, it is because the Germanophile Press, which was then very influential in Italy, at once put a false complexion on the whole occasion, and owing to a tissue of falsehoods, I was reproached later by perfectly straightforward Italians for having failed in friendship to Italy. As a matter of fact, the chorus of approval which was heard in Paris, and which ranged from de Mum to Jaurès, was the precise measure of my tender treatment of Italy. "Surely", wrote Jaurès, "unless France and Italy go crazy, any differences between them ought to be easily adjusted, and M. Poincaré's firm, but wholly conciliatory speech, will do much to solve any future difficulties".

It still remained to close an uncomfortable correspondence and to free the Turkish passengers. M. Barrère hurried back to Rome, saw the Prime Minister without an hour's delay, and urged that the Turks must immediately go free. It was high time; the inhabitants of Tunis were beginning to show heat, and had already asked the Resident General to forward an address, asking for immediate action on the part of the French Government. But at Rome there was still dilly-dallying. A medical inspector had been sent to Cagliari to question the alleged officers, and the Italian Government pretended that this examination ought to be conclusive. This could not of course hold water for a moment, and it was now quickly decided that the passengers should be handed over to the French Consul at Cagliari, who would only let them go to Tunis if they could entirely establish their position, and that the circumstances of the capture of the two vessels should be referred to The Hague. As a result of the inspection, twenty-seven of the twenty-nine passengers were, without any sort of doubt, members of the Red Crescent, and were allowed to go on; one was invalided to

[1] This quotation and others which I shall give are an answer to dialogues published under the title of *Carnets de Georges Louis*, which have received categorical denials from M. Jules Cambon and M. Pichon. The answer of M. Paul Cambon, who died before the publication of the work, will be found in his official and private correspondence.

hospital, and one, being a little vague about himself, was returned to Marseilles.

Both Governments were thus satisfied, and any wound to national *amour propre* agreeably healed when the German and Austrian Press must insinuate that Italy had been humiliated and had suffered something of a Fashoda. These vapourings were distributed among Continental newspapers until people began to ask themselves if there could be so much smoke without any fire, and a disagreeable impression looked likely to increase when another French ship was pounced upon by Italian torpedo boats. Happily, in this case, an immediate reference to The Hague was arranged, but to allay a further outburst of feeling in Tunis, I was obliged to telegraph a reminder that the French Government looked to the Tunisians for prudence as much as for patriotism.

Still Tittoni—who later became one of France's most sincere friends—could not be got to see that the French Republic was not at war with Turkey, and could not therefore play any active part alongside of Italy.

In spite of his very definite instructions from his Government, he adopted so strange—almost, one might say, offensive—a tone, that I was obliged to ask Barrère to give a hint to the Italian Prime Minister. I knew that Tittoni, who was just then hand in glove with the German and Russian Ambassadors here, was accusing me not only of remarks which I never made but of a line of thought entirely at variance with my public utterances. I knew also for a fact that he gave an inaccurate version of my speeches to the Consulta, that he suggested I paid scant heed to the Agreement of 1902, and hinted at reprisals against us in Morocco. I was determined to regain the goodwill of my very able, if rather unreasonable, friend, and he very soon gave me an opportunity of testifying anyhow to the loyalty of my Government. Turkey was trying to get a loan of 100,000,000 francs from France, and Tittoni made no ado to ask that I should warn the banks against an act which, if not a positive breach of neutrality, would be a very unfriendly operation. I was able to put this matter quite right in his

eyes, and those very piercing eyes at once looked upon me a little more sympathetically.

A happy chance now also enabled Tittoni to pronounce on the house-tops the friendship of our two countries. The Franco-Italian League conceived the idea of paying signal honour at the Sorbonne to the name of the herald of aviation, the inventor of "heavier than air", Leonardo da Vinci, and the ambassador, finally convinced as to the sincerity of our goodwill, lent himself joyously to the festivity which took place on the 4th February. A great deal of oratory was expended in expounding the Latin Union, and I did all I could to draw from the life of Leonardo such reflections on this happy concord as I thought might interest the huge company assembled at the Sorbonne.[1]

Tittoni replied in a speech that was at once graceful and packed with practical considerations. In the original draft which he was good enough to send me there occurred the sentence: "The whole Italian people is now united in a noble outburst of patriotism as well as in national cohesion, and it is only natural they should be supremely sensible of the sympathies of those who undertake a civilising mission". I offered no objection to this phrase, though it seemed doubtful whether it was calculated to praise or to blame France, but the Ambassador, just before the meeting, told me that he thought the phrase a little vague, and had substituted: "Let us pay our homage to the civilising mission which it accomplishes". Here, anyhow, was nothing but praise, even if that praise was only addressed to Italy.

[1] "Un grand artiste qui est un philosophe et un savant, et qui résume en lui toutes les curiosités et toutes les aspirations de l'humanité, une intelligence divinatrice qui devance les siècles et pénètre l'avenir, un esprit à la fois imaginatif et précis, dont l'unité puissante est faite d'harmonie dans la variété, un homme qui, né sur les pentes du Mont Albano, grandi sous le ciel de Florence, vient mourir en Touraine, au milieu du doux jardin de la France, comme une fleur de lis rouge qui s'effeuille sur le sol gaulois, n'est-ce pas là, par excellence, une figure représentative et symbolique, où se trouvent réunis, dans le plus gracieux assemblage, les traits des deux sœurs latines ? . . . C'est un heureux présage que de voir apparaître, à l'aurore des temps modernes, sous les auspices d'un Léonard, les premiers signes de l'amitié qui viendra, au dix-neuvième et au vingtième siècles, ajouter à la parenté des deux nations un lien volontaire et infrangible."

Tittoni came away from the Sorbonne quite radiant, and wrote to me the next day that he was still under the spell of the previous evening, and that he wished to thank me for my more than kindly words about himself and my more than friendly words about his country. In my answer, I told him that France would always seek to consolidate her friendship with Italy, and to base it not on flimsy sentiments but on a genuine understanding of our mutual interests. For the rest of the year Tittoni and I saw much of one another, and constantly—and by no means unsuccessfully—sought to match the ideal with the practical.

M. Isvolsky has put on record a conversation on this matter which I had with him in 1912. "Since 1902", I told him, "we know that Italy will take no part in an attack against us. As we have no wish to attack any one else, we have given up any idea of concentrating military forces on the Italian frontier. I have good reason for knowing that Italy has no doubts as to our friendship: I believe that she considers Russia and France as her best friends, and that in the event of actual trouble she would look to them more than to her official allies. But, like M. Sazonoff, I think that neither we nor you have any wish to draw Italy out of the Triple Alliance; such a departure could only lead to dangerous complications. We can, of course, never forget that Italy does belong to that Alliance, and we cannot put magnanimity to the point of giving her predominance in the Mediterranean. But providing the balance of nations is maintained we shall do our best to back our Latin sister as soon as the Peace Conference has sat. Do not let us ask Italy to break away from her Allies; she is much better for the moment where she is." In Germany some attempt was made to read into these words a Machiavellian meaning; surely they go to prove that we were neither thinking of setting group against group nor of dislocating the Triple Alliance, and that we were really congratulating ourselves that there should be included in this Alliance a nation which was openly the friend of France.

CHAPTER III

Voting the Franco-German Treaty—Opposition by M. Clemenceau—Morocco—Difficulties made by Germany.

With the question as to Tunis disposed of, the Senate turned on the 5th February to the Franco-German Treaty. I had done all I could to hurry on an inevitable debate, my chief anxiety being to prevent any recurrence of the squabbles which had just been hushed down. Unfortunately, before I took office, the deciphered German telegrams, commonly called *les verts*, had been something of an open secret, and there had been a good deal of whispering and back-chat about them. M. Genouvrier, a well-known Senator of the Right, had asked as to the truth of the story; de Selves blandly professed ignorance, Caillaux went a little further in contradiction. It was, of course, awkward to tell the Germans we were reading their telegrams; also, how could one accept as gospel what they disclosed? The debate meandered on for several days until Pichon, who had been Clemenceau's Foreign Minister, in a cutting speech tried to tear the Treaty to shreds and vowed he would not vote for it. M. Ribot and M. Méline—a former Prime Minister—were lucid and practical in trying to bring Pichon to reason, and at the end of the week I said what I had to say.

The Treaty, I urged, despite its imperfections must be ratified. It advantages would be found largely to outweigh its drawbacks; its issues were far more important than anything to be found in the Algeciras Agreement. The drafting had been criticised as wordy and windy, with obvious loopholes, and as likely to be wholly inoperative in the way of cementing relations between the two countries. The answer was quite simple; like all treaties, this one would

fail or succeed precisely as it met with sympathetic treatment or the reverse. It was not the first time that we had signed a colonial agreement, strictly limited in scope, with Germany, and there was no reason why we should come to grief here: we had only to protect our own rights with the frankness and good faith which should be the hall-mark of every sound diplomatic move. The terms of the Treaty left open a way to adjust any differences; a reference to The Hague could always be made on any point which did not actually affect national honour, and this was in itself an indication of the conciliatory attitude which both contracting parties should whole-heartedly adopt. Nor, as M. Ribot had been forward to suggest, would our general policy be in any way affected: our alliance with Russia and our entente with England would stand exactly as before, and, indeed, international politics would come more and more under the immediate control of Parliament. The French Republic, as I reminded Parliament, was wholly pacific, but the best way to keep peace is to maintain at their proper strength our naval, military and financial forces, to cling to our great traditions, to defend our rights and guard our interests.

M. Clemenceau would have none of the Treaty; his indomitable pluck was more than a match for the violent internal pains which were just then attacking him, and his fiery speech swayed a group of senators to his side. He professed himself anxious, but quite unable, to support me. Long and obscure negotiations, he thought, had only issued in the birth of a diplomatic eccentricity which bore a good deal of likeness to the Trojan horse. Our march to Fez he admitted as probably justifiable on the grounds of saving threatened European lives, but Caillaux's overweening ambition had led him into assuming hurriedly a Moroccan protectorate, which might cost us very dear. M. Caillaux had given away points to Germany because that country had dangled before him a prospect of a French Empire in Africa: M. Caillaux had treated with the enemy under the threat of Agadir. Clemenceau, having painted a rather gloomy picture, proceeded to dilate on our relations with Germany, and to insist that the Hohenzollerns were aiming more and more

directly at a European hegemony. "True, we want peace", he cried, "in order to build up again our country, but if war is thrust upon us we shall be found ready. Germany thinks that world dominion lies for her in the folds of victory; defeat for us would mean that we should be her perpetual vassals. We are pacifists, or rather pacific, but we are not yet the under-dog; a long and illustrious record lies behind us, and we intend to carry it forward along its highest level." The rapturous applause of a highly inflammatory speech was sure proof that after Tangier and Agadir France was both wounded, and sorry to have signed a Treaty under the guns of the *Panther*; it was obvious that we must be as careful to forbid any slight to our national honour as to ward off the risks which war would bring in its train. When the Treaty was put to the vote 212 were found in favour of, and only 42 against, it and Genouvrier's motion — directed against Caillaux personally—to inquire into the negotiations was negatived by an overwhelming majority. But some of the questions, of which notice had been given before I took office, threatened a retrospective discussion which might tickle the ears of Europe, but could not be otherwise than harmful to France. All the experienced Ambassadors, M. Barrère, M. Paul Cambon, M. Jules Cambon, begged me to prevent this, and Paul Cambon wrote on the 23rd February: "The washing of our dirty linen in public will have a shocking effect here; your debate is thought to have been unduly strung out, but the result is quite satisfactory, and you have established yourself in public esteem".

A few days later Baron de Lanken, the German Chargé d'Affaires, came to see M. Paléologue. Under a veneer of frosty politeness the Baron—later to figure as the executioner of Nurse Cavell—personified the most detestable type of Prussian arrogance and cruelty. He was invariably the bearer of unpleasant news, and when the German Embassy had something disagreeable to say de Lanken was always the man to say it.[1] "I want", he said icily to Paléo-

[1] In the *Lyon républicain* of 12th October 1922 there is an account of Lanken offering threats to the Colonial Minister with regard to Central Africa.

logue, " to speak to you privately and as a friend. I must warn you of the very unpleasant impression left on my Government by the disclosure of telegrams which my Embassy sent last summer, and which appear to have been deciphered by your Foreign Office. I hope that Parliament will take no notice of these documents. I must tell you also that these telegrams have been very clumsily deciphered; in the last of them words are attributed to me of which nine-tenths are wholly inaccurate." Poor Paléologue had to reply in one of those cryptic phrases with which diplomacy at critical moments prompts her faithful servants. He said that at the Quai d'Orsay there was no deciphering department, and certainly that in the whole wide world there was no cryptographer sufficiently clever to make out a cipher as complicated as the German code was sure to be. Baron de Lanken, who more than anything else wanted to be nasty, pretended to be satisfied and took his leave. As a matter of fact he knew perfectly well that for some months the German telegrams had been deciphered, and that as soon as the German Embassy had found this out the cipher had been changed, when our Foreign Office was, of course, nonplussed.

A rash remark of M. Fondère, who had been informed by Caillaux of the contents of the telegrams, had put the German Embassy on the scent, and the question now was whether the Chambre would rake up all these back numbers and ask if the story of the affair were true or not, if the German Embassy had correctly reported Fondère's words, if Fondère had been authorised, or asked, to speak as he had done, if he had been—as later he admitted—a go-between for the former Prime Minister or only—as Caillaux asserted —an informer. One easily saw the mischief such a discussion would bring, and I could see nothing to be gained by it.

Caillaux had been careful to keep a dossier in which he had put down anything likely to clear him of reproaches levelled at him, and he had asked me to pigeon-hole this at the Quai d'Orsay for his eventual justification. Jules Cambon asked me also to deposit among the archives the letters which he had written during the negotiations to

the last Prime Minister, and it would seem that if our Ambassador at Berlin had been surprised by Fondère's mission to the Vice-President of the Reichstag, he thought it quite right that later on Caillaux, as Prime Minister, should be directly responsible for the pourparlers. "M. Thiers", he said, "would have been very much surprised if anybody had questioned his right to correspond privately with M. de Gontaut Biron while M. de Rémusat was in charge of Foreign Affairs". Generally speaking, apart from any imprudent language on the part of Caillaux, our Ambassador at Berlin was quite at one with the former Chief of the Government on the questions which had to be worked out, and to avoid what must have been an unhappy debate, I was ready to say that former Governments had fully done their duty. But would such a statement suffice to cool the rather feverish deputies? Fifty of these, belonging to the party of the Right, had asked for a revision of Article 8, by which the President of the Republic—under Government responsibility—had the right to negotiate and ratify treaties, and to choose the moment when they should be communicated to Parliament. Like all presidential prerogatives, this is of course only theoretic, for the substantive right is exercised, as in all constitutional countries, by the Ministers. These deputies were chiefly concerned about our Agreements in 1902 with Italy, and in 1904 with Spain. "Show us the result of these Conventions and secret negotiations", cried their leader, M. Piou. "Long years of uneasiness, on two occasions an imminent war, sacrifices made by us in the four corners of the globe, after Tangier, Agadir; after Algeciras, Berlin; a dismembered Congo; a useless Protectorate in Morocco; at every point friction with Germany; interminable negotiations at Madrid; relationships which no longer grip; and old friendships which are growing cold. This is where these so-called agreements have brought France."

Such a jeremiad could not pass without protest, but I had no idea of risking a Parliamentary digging-up of past transactions; enough to reaffirm that the Government would always submit, so far as possible, the conduct of

foreign affairs both to Parliamentary control and public judgment, and this chiefly because, if the Convention is to have any real and lasting effect, it must appeal to the innermost feelings of the people. Piou's motion was rejected by a huge majority, most of the Radicals and Socialists voting with the Government, and questions set down before I took office were in almost every case withdrawn. Jaurès, however, insisted on airing his views on Morocco, and proceeded to arraign successively Delcassé, Clemenceau, Pichon, Briand, Monis and Cruppi, intimating that at the next sitting he would tackle Caillaux and de Selves. All the ex-Ministers were of course longing to reply, but I managed to secure their silence. Their wish, however —as I told Parliament on the 25th—to justify themselves in face of a wanton attack was more than reasonable; their lot was that of many loyal servants of the State, whose devotion to duty does not render them immune from subsequent obloquy and reproach. But as no clinching documentary evidence could be produced without the consent of other Powers, any retrospective debate would only mean setting Frenchmen against Frenchmen with baneful effect to France. I begged, therefore, the ex-Ministers to make no further parley, and I took upon myself to declare that if their methods had been widely different, the patriotic object of successive Ministers had been the same. I was able then to say that our Minister at Tangier, M. Regnault, was leaving that day for Fez and would obtain the Sultan's signature to our Protectorate; this would be the natural corollary of the Agreement of the 4th November, and would be referred to Parliament as quickly as possible.

The Government realised that it was impossible to wait until the end of our long and tedious negotiations with Spain before establishing our régime in Africa. France could not forget that the Treaty of the 4th November had indirectly procured considerable advantages for Spain, and we were therefore clearly entitled to certain economic compensations and even to some adjustments of frontiers with respect to the delimitation laid down in 1904. The majority of the Chambre now only wanted to close the debate, but Jaurès,

who was determined that Caillaux should also come under his lash, proceeded to deliver himself of another series of strictures. "Parliament no longer exists", he protested, "if former Ministers can slink away and withhold information which they owe to us. If M. Caillaux and M. Cruppi refuse to speak, they ought to be disqualified from Parliament." M. Abel Ferry, who three years later was killed at the front in very gallant circumstances, ejaculated very pertinently that it often requires more pluck to be silent than to speak. Caillaux remained silent and Jaurès continued to taunt him, to dilate on alleged separate negotiations which he and de Selves had conducted, and to insinuate secret engagements until Caillaux was stung to spring up and rap out an unqualified denial. Not another word could the Socialist gad-fly draw from the ex-Minister, and my own reply to Jaurès—who had made no attack on the Government of the day—was followed by a vote of confidence passed by five-sixths of the sitting members. "You have put your foot down on a lighted match which might have shown up a bygone scandal", Jules Cambon wrote to me from Berlin; "one must hope that the public spirit will now steady itself; things seem a good deal awry". Having stamped out the lighted match, the Government—to regularise our position in Morocco—had now to carry out, harmoniously with Germany, the Treaty of November, to determine our entente with Spain and to organise our new Protectorate. In this triple duty there were a good many obstacles to get over.

Contrary to expectation the Treaty had done nothing to improve Franco-German relations; on either side of the frontier an undefinable uneasiness prevailed. In France this arose in some degree from the differences between Caillaux and de Selves, which, for long suspected, were by now fully known and freely commented on.

But there was a much deeper cause for trouble. In an article written immediately after William II. had disembarked at Tangier, Jaurès insisted on the necessity of eliminating, as he expressed it, any suggestion of *revanche*. He was bound to add: "I know that even when Germany

is merely taking ordinary precautions against external attack her manners and methods are so rough that they are sure to provoke resentment, while her procedure is aggravated by the violent oscillations of an Imperial but irresponsible will". This "roughness" had manifested itself very clearly at Agadir, and here without a shadow of excuse, for neither under the Monis nor the Caillaux Government had Germany experienced the slightest threat of any attack on her; certainly no French Government of whatever colour would have taken the responsibility of waging war—in the hope of wiping out a defeat—when there could be no certainty of victory, and when even victory would mean a desperate and bloody struggle. Over and over again Imperial Germany had left on a profoundly peace-loving democracy an impression of a brutal hand, and, as that very honest German, Professor Foerster, himself wrote—Germany wished to "perpetuate the policy of the mailed fist".

After having instructed Prince Hohenlohe in 1880, on the eve of the Madrid Conference, to tell Monsieur de Freycinet that she had no interests in Morocco, after having repeated, seven years later, this declaration to the Spanish Ambassador at Berlin, after having renewed these assurances, in January 1903, to the French Ambassador, and after having proclaimed in 1904 that she had no objections to offer to the Anglo-French Agreement signed on the 8th of April;—after all this Germany suddenly went back on herself. Whether it was now Germany or the German Emperor no one can say; until 1918 they were to all intents and purposes one and the same.

On the 31st of March 1905 the Imperial yacht *Hohenzollern* appeared off Tangier; William disembarked and, in highly provocative tones, said that his visit had for its object to let the world know his determination to do all in his power to safeguard effectively Germany in Morocco. Then when the Sultan—who meantime had been cleverly got round—invited the Powers to a Conference, Baron de Lanken, a liege man of the Emperor, and Prince Radolin, the German Ambassador, were successively told to offer the same threat to the then Prime Minister[1]—"Pray

[1] M. Rouvier.

remember that Germany is at the back of Morocco". The Algeciras Agreement was signed on the 8th April 1906, and immediately German agents, such as Karl Ficke and Mannesmann, started their manœuvres; and under the auspices of the Imperial councillor—Herr Lüdenitz—an agency was run at Casablanca to induce German soldiers in the Foreign Legion to desert. As a result of these intrigues came the Casablanca incident of the 25th of September 1908, when the political sky darkened again. In a conciliatory spirit France signed with Germany the Protocol of the 9th of February 1909, in which the two countries mutually promised to co-operate in the matter of their colonists and their industries in Morocco. It was a barren effort, for neither Mannesmann nor Karl Ficke relaxed their intrigues with Mouley Hafid and the natives. Some of the tribes rebelled against the Sultan and went so far as openly to defy Europeans outside Fez, and the Monis Government, believing that in virtue of the International Conventions France had to keep order in Morocco, instructed General Moinier to occupy the capital and afford protection to the inhabitants and French subjects. Our Cabinet, in the most courteous terms, notified Berlin of this. The Chancellor, Herr Bethmann-Hollweg, made no protest against the actual expedition, but in thinly veiled phrases told Jules Cambon that if Germany put forward no claim in Morocco she would certainly expect compensation elsewhere. The Ambassador did not argue the point, but a little later, at Kissingen, the German Foreign Minister said very pointedly to him: "You are going to Paris in a few days—please bring us back something". A fortnight after this, without France having had any intimation of a new bang of the fist on the table, Baron de Schoen came to the Foreign Office and handed a note to de Selves announcing the despatch of a man-of-war to Agadir, under the flimsy pretext that there had been some unrest among the tribes of the south, and that it was absolutely necessary to ensure the safety of German subjects: the unrest in the Agadir territory was purely imaginary, nor were there any German interests to protect.

The German Ambassador made no attempt to conceal

that the idea was to bring France to book on the whole African question: Germany, for her part in the discussion, took a revolver in hand and during the whole negotiations the *Panther* was to remain in position with her guns trained on the coast.

How could France, treated in such fashion, not feel that she had been systematically humiliated, and that her national pride had been deliberately wounded? For myself, when I took office, I could not shut my eyes to the intense irritation which Germany's rough hand had set up. To quieten things down, and to forestall any further insolent challenges, was a twofold task demanding a cautious, but not a weak, policy.

Had I, anyhow, reason to think that the Treaty had in any way satisfied Germany, or induced more friendly feeling towards us? Unhappily, no; rather it would seem that not only pan-Germanists but Germans of every political creed set themselves to cry aloud the malpractices of their dupes.

The Colonial Secretary, M. de Lindequist, had left his office and slammed the door after him; his departure had met with noisy approval in the German Press which, for the most part, had peevishly decried the Franco-German Agreement. In rather far-fetched journalese one paper pronounced that the "Tunisification" of Morocco should have been paid for by France at a much higher price; the *National Zeitung* put out a pleasant article, "Joy in France, mourning in Germany". The editors who were the least unfavourable to the Treaty "went for" England, whom they accused of having encouraged French pretensions. "Germany", said the *Germania*, "will never forget that England has forced this Empire to take for her portion only the smallest scrap of Congolese territory, and that of very doubtful value". After having congratulated M. de Lindequist on his decision, the *Mittags Zeitung* went on acidly: "The French can now fulfil their aim of forming in Morocco a coloured force which they will use in the next European war. . . . What is Bethmann-Hollweg thinking about? Does he still entertain the idea of rapprochement with France? Friendship may be possible between certain individuals of

the two countries, but friendship between the two nations must be out of the question." M. Wolff, in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, opined that the idea of compensation in the Congo was in itself quite good, but that the execution of it had been more than bad. The leaders of the National Liberal Party were furious. Dr. Paasche wrote to the *Gazette Nationale* that after Agadir the Convention of the 4th November was a miserable climbdown ; Herr Bassermann, at a public meeting, fulminated : " These events have disheartened German patriots. . . . We demand of the Government that they should show how to use the armed forces of the Crown." In the Reichstag, where the Crown Prince heartily applauded from the Imperial box the pan-Germanist Heydebrandt, Kiderlen Waechter met with no sign of approval when, on the 10th November, he unfolded the result of his policy. The two parts of the Agreement which respectively dealt with Morocco and the Congo were criticised with equal severity, and the spectre of a Moroccan army swelling the military forces of France was evidently haunting the inflamed minds of the members. In vain did the Foreign Minister try to reassure them by declaring the German policy had achieved its object, and that Germany had only abandoned rights which she shared with other Powers, while France had given up territory which was actually French. The influence of the Nationalists and Colonials was so strong that Germany remained generally embittered and strangely jaundiced as to a transaction in which France had made much the larger sacrifices.

In Morocco itself Germans renewed and multiplied their intrigues, Mannesmann, Karl Ficke and their friends setting fresh traps every day for the French. They had just enough hold over their Government to enable them to pour in a stream of unjustifiable claims and " got-up " grievances.[1] I wonder how many times in that anxious year 1912 I saw in my room the good-humoured face of Baron Schoen and the hypocritical, evil countenance of de Lanken ; Rubens's Marie de Médicis seemed to look down on both of them from her tapestries in majestic astonishment. The pair had

[1] *La Politique Marocaine de l'Allemagne*, by Louis Maurice.

University of Winnipeg Portage

always on tap some injustice done to their compatriots ; I would listen patiently to what they had to say, and try my best to find an agreeable way out. Baron Schoen was always willing to help ; neither in the Moroccan trouble nor later in the Balkan crisis had I ever the slightest cause for complaint as to what he said or did ; invariably courteous and even affable, he strove to be as conciliatory as his instructions allowed him.

He has put on record what he had already told the Belgian Minister when I was elected President that I had constantly advocated peace and strained every nerve to avoid war ;[1] in all fairness the same should be said of himself. Our relations were always friendly, and I suppose I was the first President to accept an invitation to dinner at the German Embassy. This innovation caused some talk at the time, but the Ambassador had shown so much consideration to me as Prime Minister that I could only have pleasure in doing something—however novel—which I knew at the time pleased him.

Unfortunately, during the whole of 1912 our mutual goodwill was powerless to prevent incidents which occurred in unhappy succession at Morocco, and which always brought in their train fresh worries from the Imperial Government. Germany supported every demand of her protected subjects, whether these were right or quite obviously wrong, and took special delight in playing up against us the survival of the old Consular régime. One day it would be German protégés who had enlisted in the Foreign Legion, and whom Germany still claimed as her own. I quoted the rights of individuals ; I referred the complainants to Article 12 of our Treaty which obliged Germany to revise the lists of her protégés, by now swollen to absurd proportions. Schoen replied with a good-tempered laugh, Lanken with an ugly sneer ; I was unable to get a single name removed. Another day some natives such as Mohammed Hiba or the Caid Quellouli would get up a little rebellion and we would take steps to put it down. Germany would at once dash in, place these worthies under her wing and oppose any action on our part. Another

[1] *Baseler Nachrichten*, 5th January 1922.

time, at the douar of the Oulad Bessan, we arrested some thieves and handed them over to be dealt with by law. "Hand back these thieves," Berlin telegraphed, "they are associated with the German firm of Renschausen". "But", we would answer, "you have recognised our right to set up a judicial system based on European legislature"; eventually the matter had to go for arbitration. Then the next day, as if to thank us for giving way, Germany must send up the Dragoman Schellinger, who swaggered in with a pompous escort, and openly said that he had come in the name of the Emperor to alter the balance of French and Moroccan authority. But the most dangerous intriguer in Morocco was the ineffable Karl Ficke, who in 1914 was arrested as a spy, tried and condemned to be shot. Among his papers was found a complete correspondence which exhibited unmistakable preparations for war. He had never recognised the Treaty his Fatherland had made with us, nor that Morocco had passed under our influence; he brooded over revenge and worked for it with a host of correspondents in Germany. Quite recently, when winding up the affairs of a certain Nehrkorn, the founder of the Karl Ficke establishment, the Sequestration Board came on a letter addressed to this individual by one Windhaus, who was living at Kiel. On the 20th January 1912 Herr Windhaus wrote gleefully to Ficke's representative: "Between ourselves, naval people calculate that we shall have war as soon as the enlargement of the Kiel Canal is finished and the big ships now in dry dock are launched, *i.e.* somewhere in 1914; the army officers, I gather, put it earlier, and say it is a question of months". This letter, which M. Herriot quoted to me when he was Prime Minister, goes to show that Ficke, Nehrkorn and their agents were doing all they could to push on war, and hoped it would not be long delayed. The party were pulling the strings of the Imperial Government from Morocco to Berlin and from Berlin to Paris, and were keeping poor Baron Schoen perpetually on the run. "Some French troops", he said to me, "have occupied some property belonging to M. Ficke, and France must indemnify him". In my desire to be conciliatory, I

again accepted a compromise ; Ficke drew a pretty good sum from the local exchequer, and if war had not occurred, he would probably have put a good deal more to his account. On the 28th July 1913 General Lyautey wrote to M. Pichon, who had again become Foreign Minister, " German hostility to us colours all her policy with regard to Morocco ". While one cannot trace the outbreak of the Great War to Morocco, the same spirit which inspired the Mannesmanns, Karl Ficke and Windhaus seems to have fired the hearts of most Germans.

CHAPTER IV

Organisation of Moroccan Protectorate—M. Regnault's mission—Rising at Fez—General Lyautey appointed Resident-General—Colonel Mangin at Marakech—Entente with Spain—Negotiations and treaty.

Out of regard for Spain, I should have preferred to have come to an agreement with the Government of Madrid before establishing our new system of administration in Morocco, but negotiations with our neighbours lumbered along so slowly that I was obliged to deal first with the Sultan. It was a question of keeping the peace in Morocco and securing the safety of our colonists there. On the 17th Kaada 1329—in other words, on the 19th November 1911—Mouley Hafid had written to M. de Selves that, "on the explanations of the highly esteemed Taleb, Abdel Kader Ben Ghabrit," a very faithful friend of France, it had been decided to ratify our Franco-German Treaty. He added: "As soon as the representative of your Government shall submit to our Majesty the reforms necessary for the prosperity, the development and the general benefit of the country, he will find with our Majesty all the support justified by our declarations which are made in all sincerity and goodwill". I had been at some pains to study a plan for our protectorate; I had begun by making sure that England would not cling to her former notion that we must obtain the consent of the representatives of the Algeciras Conference before establishing our protectorate. Great Britain now admitted that France could go ahead and secure the Sultan's acceptance of the protectorate recognised by Germany, and then ask for the formal consent of any missing signatories of the Algeciras Act. Our Minister at Tangier was deputed to communicate the proposed treaty to the Sultan, and

on the 29th February the expenses of his mission were unanimously voted. M. Vaillant, a socialist deputy, asked quite discreetly if it would be possible to know in advance the terms of the Treaty, and I told him that, although I could not furnish these before the negotiations, Parliament would be asked to examine them before any ratification. Regnault left Tangier on the 16th March and arrived a week later at Fez. His cortège of spahis, with mounted chasseurs bringing up the rear, passed through the streets of the Holy City between two lines of French and Moroccan soldiers; a few hours later, accompanied by Generals Moinier and Dalbiez, the French Consul and the Staff of the Garrison, he was received in solemn audience by Mouley Hafid. A polite address was delivered by the Grand Vizier, El Mokri, but a tepid greeting was bestowed on our envoy. For some days foreign agents—Spaniards such as Dr. Beringuer and Germans under the influence of the brothers Mannesmann and Karl Ficke—had put the Sultan up to make a show of resistance, in the hope of giving the Moroccan question an international complexion of which the Treaty of the 4th November had deprived it. A little bewildered between the promises which he had given to France and the advice he had received from elsewhere, Mouley Hafid had several times announced his intention of abdicating; one day he thought he would go and the next day he settled to stay. The proposal of a visit to Paris, very opportunely made by the French Government, decided the volatile ruler to examine the terms of the Treaty, a study which occupied him for a week. He raised one or two objections and made one or two stipulations, but on the 30th March he made up, what he was pleased to call, his mind to sign the document and accept our protectorate over his entire domain, on condition that we engaged ourselves to give him our unswerving support should his person or provinces be in any way threatened. A Resident General Commissioner was to represent the Republic in Morocco, and diplomatic secretaries and French Consuls would be charged to watch over Moroccan individuals and interests in the Spanish, as much as in the French, regions. The mission

which I had entrusted to Regnault, for which his experience of African affairs specially qualified him, had therefore its full measure of success ; he gave a banquet, the Sultan gave a return banquet, and our agreement was thus agreeably sealed. For a time there was an outward calm, but an ugly storm was brewing. On the night of the 17th April, a telegram informed us that a rebellion had broken out at Fez, and we were obliged to take immediate steps to reinforce our army of occupation. Apparently as soon as he had signed the treaty, the Sultan cheerfully announced he was about to start for France, and the news was badly received by the natives. Things, however, seemed so quiet that General Moinier thought he could take his troops away from the South. On the 17th, 3000 men of the Cherifian tabors quite unexpectedly revolted, murdered their officers, and went in pursuit of French civilians ; the Sultan himself was in danger of his life. There was a good deal of bloodshed in the streets between the insurgents and the Tirailleurs who had been left in the town, and who were quickly reinforced by the troops General Moinier brought back. The Commander-in-Chief suspected treason and a plot on the part of the Maghzen ; Regnault thought differently and assured me that this trouble had neither been provoked nor encouraged by Moroccan authorities ; this was equally the opinion of Mr. McLeod, the British Consul, who was our firm friend. Both officials agreed that the rebellion had broken out quite suddenly and that it was due to unfortunate military blunders, especially the reduction of the pay and the obligation to carry the haversack, which had wounded the *amour propre* of the Moroccan soldiers. Some Askris had also complained that the men killed in the Sefrou fights had been buried in their uniform, while those who had died in the service of the Maghzen had, after the ceremonial ablutions, been put naked into their shrouds.

Anyhow, neither the War Office nor the Foreign Office had received the slightest information which could suggest an imminent revolt, and Paris was rather upset about it. Telegrams from Regnault and General Moinier showed also that there were daily differences between the civilian and the

soldier ; the latter wanted to bombard the town, the former would have nothing to do with reprisals. The General deemed it expedient to proclaim a state of siege, the Minister thought this would do more harm than good. The General wanted to impose a war-tax on the people ; the civil servant said that we had no legal right to tax the protected subjects of other Powers who were the best able to afford it but the most unfriendly to ourselves, and that to penalise the natives and spare the others would be to commit a crying injustice. Every day we had to intervene from Paris ; we had authorised the state of siege, but suspended the institution of a tax.

We decided that Regnault should carry out the functions of a Resident, but that Moinier should be responsible for purely military operations, an arrangement which would only be temporary and provisional as a prolonged dual control was sure to lead to trouble. The difficulty was how to put the military command under civilian authority. For the moment the state of the country and the probability of new trouble seemed to render indispensable the appointment of the soldier to supreme control ; my opinion was shared by my Cabinet, especially by Briand, Bourgeois and Millerand. We had to remember also, that our protectorate had not yet been recognised by America, England or Spain, and that it might be awkward, until we secured this, to define rigidly our régime. To put an end to these uncertainties, we decided to appoint a general who would be a good administrator no less than a good soldier. The names of General D'Amade and General Lyautey at once occurred to us ; both had considerable experience of Africa, both had shown the special qualities required for the post. After a little hesitation and much talk with Millerand, we decided upon General Lyautey, whom I had known in Algeria, where he had attracted me by his mental alertness and by his sympathetic understanding of the Mussulman temperament. I felt more than sorry for Regnault, an admirable official, who had served us well in our occupation of Morocco, but who was perhaps a little too crustily conservative to be at his best in a new régime.

On the 27th April the Ministers met at Rambouillet ; the President admitted that he personally would have preferred a civilian to take charge of Morocco, and he appealed to Republican traditions. M. Fallière was, however, quite open to conviction, and accepted the arguments of Bourgeois and myself that for the moment the military hand was absolutely required, and that it would be premature to give supreme control to a civilian. Lyautey was nominated, and in informing Regnault of his appointment, and thanking him for his own fine services, we told him that he would soon receive a high diplomatic appointment, and begged him to remain at Fez until the arrival of the new Resident so as to help him with information and advice. With patriotic selflessness, Regnault accepted the new situation, and willingly promised to do all we asked. The next day we breakfasted at Millerand's delightful place in Versailles, and General Lyautey was of the party ; during our meal we learnt by telephone that two anarchists, who had escaped in a motor-car after their arrest, and whose accomplice a few days earlier had assassinated the Chief of Police, had been discovered and taken at Choisi-le-Roi ; in the struggle, having wounded two of the police, they had themselves been killed. This sensational incident did not deflect us from our business, and the whole of that Sunday afternoon was devoted to the organisation of the Moroccan protectorate. General Lyautey gave us his views very clearly ; his vocabulary was so rich that he was tempted to occasional digressions, but he could throw light on every essential point and go far to solve some of the more difficult problems to hand.

At Fez, things seemed to be quiet again, and a proclamation had been read out to the troops in which Mouley Hafid sharply rated the mutineers. But in spite of his praiseworthy display of loyalty, the Sultan somehow seemed to elude French influence. When told by his Grand Vizier of General Lyautey's appointment, he showed very bad grace, and despite the efforts of Regnault and the faithful Ben Ghabrit to sooth the imperial anger, he again threatened to abdicate.

It was difficult to understand what the Sultan was "driving at". On the 30th April he replied most amiably to a telegram from Lyautey; on the 1st May he was in the sulks and wanted to go on strike. I found out that his threats to retire had been going on for some months, and my predecessor had given him in writing leave to abdicate when he liked, and to live on his own estate. Mouley Hafid now quoted this former promise, but gave us to understand that if he might leave Fez and settle down at Rabba at his ease, he would not vacate the throne; Regnault and Moinier thought this the less of two evils. It was high time that Lyautey should take over his post, and on the 13th May he was on his way from Tangier to Casablanca—the very day on which William II. made his ostentatious entry into Strasbourg through silent and empty streets. When, on the 24th, Lyautey arrived at Fez, some harkas of the Berberi tribes, led by the Marabout Sidi Raho, were approaching the town to assault it; that evening some of the bolder spirits among the assailants succeeded in opening a breach. Sharp fighting occurred between them and the loyal troops; the Berberis were pushed back on to the banks of the Sebou, where they were reinforced to return and make their way into the heart of the city and into the Mouley-Idriss mosque. The General at once gave an order for a counter-attack and the enemy was driven out, scattered and hunted back into the hills by Colonel Gouraud, who was promoted General as a reward for a victory which was the forerunner of many others in a far larger field.

But in Paris, when the news came in there was much ado; the more so as the Press had got hold of a telegram in which Lyautey had told me in rather too coloured language that he was "encamped in an enemy country". I tried to ease people's minds and I gave the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chambre every scrap of news I received from the General, which happily day by day was more and more reassuring. On the 6th June, Mouley Hafid decided to leave his brother Mouley Youssef to represent him at Fez, and betook himself to Rabba, where he proposed to hand over more and more of his responsibilities to the Grand

Vizier El Mokri. Every Friday now questions were before Parliament about Morocco, and to put an end to this weekly entertainment I asked for an extraordinary meeting for the 1st of July, when I could show how necessary it was to secure an immediate vote for our protectorate. Jaurès wanted to have, instead of a protectorate, a simple alliance with the Sultan. I told him that his idea of being the official defender of the weak and oppressed was very fine, but that he allowed his imagination to run away with him. France must be in Morocco what she had been in Algiers and Tunis, a great civilising power ; to give up our protectorate would be a desertion of duty. Our negotiations at Algeciras, our agreement with Germany in 1909, our difficult pourparlers of 1911, our painful part in the Treaty of the 5th of November, our giving up of Congolese Territory, all that our army had dared and done ;—all this would have been in vain and we should very likely see our place taken to-morrow by other nations. I explained clearly all the pros and cons of the protectorate and gave a précis[1] of the work before us, and at the end of the debate the Protectorate Bill was passed in both chambers, ratified by the President and at once made operative.

But Mouley Hafid had again taken up his favourite chant of wishing to come to France, and the General, bored to death by his petulance, fixed for a handsome sum for his maintenance and accepted his abdication.

I had been told about this before setting out for Russia, and at St. Petersburg I heard from Briand, who was acting for me, that Mouley Hafid was on his way to Marseilles. The General now became a kingmaker and had to look about for a new Sovereign. At first he thought

[1] " La collaboration loyale et constante avec les indigènes nous sera au Maroc aussi utile qu'en Algérie et en Tunisie. La légitime horreur que nous inspirent la sauvagerie de certaines bandes et les abominables massacres de Fez ne sauraient ni justifier le mépris des indigènes ni excuser des représailles administratives. Le Général Lyautey a été très heureusement inspiré en alliant à la fermeté la clémence et la douceur. La conquête matérielle n'est solide que tout autant qu'elle commence par une conquête morale. Les bienfaits du protectorat seront d'autant mieux assurés que l'administration sera plus respectueuse des mœurs et des idées musulmanes et fera preuve de bienveillance et d'humanité."

the best choice should be the individual who had been beaten in 1908 by Mouley and turned off his throne after having vaguely appealed to France for help. But Abd el Azziz was a gloomy individual and would not at all have suited the new conditions. Eventually the General decided on Mouley Youssef, who had always kept up friendly relations with the French authorities, and his election was duly proclaimed through the Maghzen up and down the Empire. We were not yet, however, out of trouble, for on the 18th of August an upstart rival, El Heïba, made his entry into Marakech. He was a son of a famous conspirator Ma-el-Ainian, and his brothers had a good deal of influence in the Sahara region which belonged to our Occidental Africa.

This movement might have had grave consequences; at the head of an army numbering several thousands, El Heïba had achieved remarkable successes. The M'Tougui had rallied to him, the Glaoui had not been able to bar his road, and now having mastered the southern capital this truculent insurgent was making ready to march on the Chaouïa, while, unhappily, he had in his power five French prisoners taken at Marakech.

When I wished Lyautey good-bye I told him to be sparing as regards military expeditions and to proceed by easy stages, and it had been arranged that we should not at once occupy Marakech. But in face of new facts the General told me that notwithstanding my instructions and those which he himself had given at first he had ordered Colonel Mangin [1] to go for Marakech and try and rescue the Frenchmen.

I must admit I was a little nervous as to whether this might not result in our compatriots being massacred. But on thinking it over—and although the General himself had begun to share my uneasiness—I decided not to call a halt and I told Paléologue, the Director of Political Affairs, that we must find a formula which would combine praise and reproach; we would imitate Manlius Torquatus without going so far as to behead Lyautey. On the 17th of September Colonel Mangin rushed Marakech and occupied it to find, to his delight, our countrymen quite safe. The

[1] An army commander in the Great War.

population had risen against El Heïba as soon as they heard our troops were at hand; the usurper had bolted; the prisoners had been set free by the Glaoui; General Lyautey had received a smiling reprimand and warm congratulations.

For the development of our influence in Morocco it now only remained to come to terms with Spain, which was, however, not quite so easy, for, in the course of 1911, Moroccan affairs had roused comments in Madrid. For many centuries Spain had owned on the northern coast of Morocco the *presides* of Melilla, Ceuta, Alhucemas, and Penon de Velez, and since 1848 had occupied the Zaffarine Islands. She had not penetrated farther, but she clung tenaciously to what she had and saw there her means to "get back" on the old invaders of the Iberian peninsula.

When France and England signed their agreement in 1904, it was arranged that we should come to an understanding with Spain for her to have a sphere of influence in Morocco; six months later, while Spain officially adhered to the Anglo-French agreement, a Treaty, which it was intended to keep secret for a while, was entered into between M. Delcassé and the Marquis del Muni. The text of this Treaty was only divulged on the 8th of November 1911 by the *Matin*, and although there had been a good deal of talk about it, the publication had left a nasty taste in the Paris mouth. At the very moment when the French Government was giving up Congolese territory in order to have a free hand in Morocco, Parliament learned that France was not going to have any monopoly, that the balcony of the Cherifian Empire over the Mediterranean would be appropriated by another Power, and that in clearing Morocco of any German mortgage, France had been working—and paying—for Spain almost as much as for herself. Further, the publication of the 1904 Treaty showed up Spain as having, a very few months earlier, blinked one of her engagements. It had been arranged that for fifteen years the Spanish Government would take no action in the septentrional zone without the preliminary consent of France; France, on the other hand, reserved to herself, during the same period, complete liberty in her own

sphere of influence, and had indeed the right to intervene in the Spanish zone on the single condition of forewarning Madrid. On the 21st of May 1911, at the urgent request of Mouley Hafid, the French troops entered Fez, and the Cabinet sitting at Madrid was pleased to think that this gave them reason to disembark their troops at Larache and occupy El Ksar despite the protest which the Sultan lodged with the doyen of the Diplomatic Corps at Tangier. France had herself protested against this high-handed Spanish action, and a debate in our Foreign Affairs Committee, on the 10th of November 1911, arising out of the Franco-German Treaty, had a quite unforeseen sequel. De Selves, who had just successfully resumed the story of the negotiations, had been pulled up short with the question as to the Spanish expedition which had occurred before the formation of the Caillaux Ministry.

He was asked if M. Cruppi, Foreign Minister in the Monis Government, had put up a timely protest; he had consulted M. Bapst, the Director of Politics, who said there had been no such protest, and M. de Selves in all good faith had appropriated his subordinate's reply. This was literally exact insomuch that in his communications to Madrid Cruppi had not used the word protest, but he had deprecated any sort of expedition in terms which were quite equally strong, and he had told our Ambassador at Madrid to advise the Spanish Government that the steps taken by them had not been approved of by France. On the 10th November de Selves gave the correct story to the commission dealing with the Franco-German Treaty and asked Bapst to take a holiday, and this is why, when I came to the Quai D'Orsay, I found the chief stool vacant and had to look for a new occupant.

The general opinion in France, however, was that it did not suffice for the Government to have disapproved in 1911 the Spanish initiative. After the sacrifices in the Congo imposed on us by the Treaty of the 4th November, many people thought that we ought to have asked for a revision of the agreement of 1904 and claimed compensation in the Spanish zone. M. Millet and M. Tardieu, among others,

went so far as to say that we ought to get back Larache and El Ksar. Jaurès, of course, took a diametrically opposite view; our Moroccan policy, he again assured us, had been full of mistakes and misadventures, and nothing could now be worse than to reopen an era of conflicts or to make use of our agreement with Germany to insult Spain and be at perpetual loggerheads with her. It was not unnatural that Caillaux should wish to fit the convention of 1904 into the new circumstances: this was a question of degree. Spain must, of course, be induced to see all that she had gained under the Treaty, but to ask her to hand over Larache and El Ksar was a little too strong. Rumour had it that Caillaux was inclined to favour Tardieu and Millet, and to have said to Jaurès with a snap of his finger, "we owe nothing to Spain". Not only this, but the King of Spain told our Chargé d'Affaires, M. William Martin, that an emissary of the French Government had used words to him personally which were nothing less than a veiled threat. "I was not in the least alarmed by this," the King said, "but I was determined there should be evidence of it, and the note I made at the time is safely locked away in my own safe, where it can be found if anything happens to me".

When Martin told me this story I at once notified Caillaux of what had been said at the Spanish Court under cover of his name. Caillaux declared he had never authorised or even suggested such a thing, and I begged Martin to submit this *démenti* at once to the King. "You know me well enough," Caillaux wrote later to a friend, "and you know well enough how I cherish the traditions of the old bourgeoisie from which I spring—and which is not without its strain of blue blood—to be sure that I would not stoop to such an action". As a matter of fact it was not necessary to be either noble or to belong to the old bourgeoisie to deprecate the odious threat of which the King spoke; an ordinary tradesman would have equally resented the idea. It was none the less unfortunate that a clever adventurer had been able for a moment to persuade the Spanish Sovereign that he had really been commissioned by a French Minister,

and as at that moment there was a rather lively campaign being waged between French and Spanish officials, the fraud contributed to protract what was already a sufficiently troublesome business. In the first interviews which I had with him, M. Perez Caballero had complained, not without some bitterness, of the *sans gêne* with which our Government had treated his by not associating Spain with our German negotiations, while asking her to pay part of the cost of the agreement; he added that the pourparlers which had been begun between Paris and Madrid, to lay down the limitations and the administration of the two zones, had been entered into in such a way as to preclude any satisfactory terms being put to them. The French Government had indeed entertained the curious idea that the internal laws and regulations of the two spheres of Morocco should be identical, in order to underline the indivisibility of the Empire. "Who is going to work out these laws and regulations?" Perez Caballero asked. "Who is going to proclaim them, and who is going to see that they are carried out? It would mean the perpetual subordination of Spain to France, or anyhow the institution of a lasting quarrel. Our national dignity could never comply with such irritating conditions."

There was certainly a good deal in what the Ambassador said, and the best, perhaps the only, thing was to direct our conversation into a more agreeable channel. One must admit, however, that in Morocco some of the Spanish were scarcely less "difficult" than the Germans. In his private letters, which make charming reading, Lyautey constantly complained to me of the Spanish Consuls, and as regards these I was constantly obliged to refer to their Governments. It was this sort of placid warfare which made the negotiations with Madrid drag so drearily on. I wonder how many interviews I had with Perez Caballero, or how many visits our hard-working Ambassador paid to M. Garcia Prieto, to discuss such delicate subjects as administrative and religious organisation, customs and revenue, the revenues from the Moroccan customs being ear-marked for former loans. A friendly intervention on the part of England eased things

here, but every precaution had to be taken, and Spain must pay an indemnity if she were released from the charge which the Customs held. But the thorniest point was the delimitation of the frontiers. We asked that Spain, now free of the fetters which Algeciras had placed on her, should recognise officially the advantages she would draw from the Treaty, and we begged her to consent to rectify, here and there, the lines rather arbitrarily sketched in October 1904. "Of course you did not take part in the negotiations," we said, "but you are going to profit by what was obtained at our expense; surely you should do a little something to make up to us?" In order to establish a liaison between Morocco and Algeria, General Lyautey would have liked France to get the Cap de l'Eau, but this suggestion was warmly opposed, partly because it had already been the subject of a long discussion, partly because the Cap de l'Eau formed, in conjunction with the neighbouring islands, a unit which it was difficult to split up, and partly that, in 1907, England, Spain and France had settled among themselves to maintain the Mediterranean *status quo*. There was, however, little chance of Lyautey's wish being gratified, and I set my face against asking anything which would leave any permanent ill-feeling on the part of Spain towards us. What I asked for was the Spanish sphere of the Midi—all except the Ifni Enclave—the bank of the Loukkos up to within ten kilometres of Larache, and the adjustment of frontiers in the Ouezzan as well as on the right bank of the Ouergha.

With this in view, I readily agreed with Spain that we should appoint a Commission of experts to study financial and fiscal questions, and this Commission was installed in Madrid, where Sir Maurice de Bunsen lent his valuable services indifferently on behalf of both countries. But the Spanish Government had other plaints. One day, on very nebulous information, they would complain that our troops had crossed the frontier marked out in 1904, and thus gone ahead of any new arrangements. Another day they wanted to stultify the nomination of a Khalifa, who was to be the representative of, and substitute for, the Sultan in the Spanish zone They would try to get

up another squabble about the Customs regulations or the formation of the company which was to lay a railway across the two zones from Fez to Tangier. Over and over again I had to tell Perez Caballero how surprised my Government was by these incessant delays. "The pourparlers", Geoffray wrote to me, "take the form of something like a monologue on my part, to which the only replies are occasional interjections, or some expression in dumb show of annoyance or protest—or at the very best, the old story that the question would receive full consideration. Things would have been much better if we had had present an *éminence grise* in the person of M. Ontoria: but this would, I suppose, have hurt the dignity of the Minister." Geoffray rendered full justice to the personal efforts of King Alfonso, who seemed to have more sympathy than any of his Ministers with the French, and who without overstepping by an inch his constitutional rights, did his very utmost to facilitate an entente. For our part, we were determined that it should go through, and prepared for any reasonable concession; friendship with Spain was no less precious to us than with Italy.

About the middle of March there came a discouraging reply; the Cap de l'Eau was refused; all rectification of the frontier on the Loukkos and to the north-west of El Ksar was refused, and our friends would only give us, and this exclusively on the left bank, a very slender portion of the Ouergha basin, quite insufficient to protect us against the Riffian tribes, or to cover Fez and Taza. We might also have a morsel of territory in the south zone. In return for this, we were to give the basin of the Moulouïa, the territory occupied by the Beni Youkai tribe, and this at the risk of having our communications cut between Morocco and Algeria. A very unpleasant impression was created in France, but any impatience or irritability might have spoilt everything. Negotiations must be started again; it was indeed the torture of Sisyphus or of the Danaides. Then came new discussions on the State Bank, the monopoly of tobacco, the division of revenue between the two zones, and the territorial limitation. The British Government very

kindly volunteered to make proposals through Sir Maurice de Bunsen as to the dividing up of the valley of the Ouergha, but no decision could be arrived at before the departure of the Court for St. Sebastian, where conversations had to be carried on, to be picked up again at Castile, and to be further spun out until mid-November, when matters were finally arranged and the Treaty signed.

The Sultan preserved his authority, civil and religious, over the whole of Morocco; his relations with foreign powers were controlled by our Resident General; his internal rights were to be exercised in the Spanish zone by the Khalifa invested with permanent dignity. On all points we had secured some compensation in the matter of territory. On the Moulouïa we were to have the debouchment of an important stream the Mechra Kila, and the banks of the Ouergha would facilitate our opening a road from Oran to Fez by Taza. We did not get the line of heights which we wanted for strategic reasons, but in the valley of the Loukkos our frontier was advantageously adjusted. M. Canaléjas and M. Prieto had urged that there should be no important diminution of the Spanish zone which they believed they would soon occupy and easily settle; the future was to give some cruel disappointments to Spain, who had to deal with by far the more indisciplined and warlike tribes. In spite of some unfortunate defects the agreement was on the whole satisfactory for both countries, and if a few French colonists were rather badly let down, not too much was said about it, as general opinion was on the whole relieved and satisfied. Our relations with Spain, which had been somewhat compromised and even a little shaken during and immediately after the Franco-German arrangements, had now become entirely friendly, and we could congratulate ourselves on the turn things had taken.

The Moroccan question was thus settled, although a few people were rather alarmed about the expense of the protectorate and the drain on us in the matter of troops. Clemenceau, especially faithful to his creed of keeping our forces concentrated in France and not dissipating them up and down a Colonial Empire, wrote to me:

"My dear President and Friend—How far will your Moroccan adventure disorganise our mobilisation? You will not be surprised that this matter causes me great anxiety, especially as I hear things which I don't for a moment believe. Please say when I may come and see you at the Quai D'Orsay."

It was easy for me to reassure Clemenceau as to our undisturbed mobilisation, and I quote his letter as a reminder how in those restless months of 1912 the idea of war obsessed patriotic Frenchmen. Clemenceau, who had slender faith in native troops, would have wished—as he himself said in the Senate—that we should keep our hands off Morocco, and that our army should remain intact on our own soil with its face to the frontier of the East. I was so far in agreement with him that I had urged General Lyautey to keep down as much as possible his forces and his military expenses, and he had loyally done so. After the Treaty had been signed he came home to spend a short leave in Lorraine and telegraphed to me from Marseilles:

"My first thought is to express to you my gratitude for your unswerving confidence and support; my only desire is to justify these in the prosecution of the important duty which the Government has entrusted to me."

It was indeed an important duty, and one which through a difficult period he had admirably fulfilled.

CHAPTER V

Internal Policy — Riddle of Germany — Emperor and People — Military Party — Conversations with Jules Cambon — Increase of effectives — William II. at Strasbourg — Report from Colonel Pellé.

While the Government of 1912 was applying itself, in the interests alike of France and of peace, to solve three problems springing from the Treaty, it had to face difficulties as great as ever burdened a Cabinet. Happily for me no Cabinet was ever more united in aim and action, and I cannot recall a single occasion on which any member of it showed himself other than entirely helpful and energetic. At first internal politics took up a good deal of our time ; the Budget of 1912 had to be passed, the Budget of 1913 had to be prepared, there were questions of anarchist attempts, of strikes and of electoral reforms varied with official journeys, unavoidable ceremonies and banquets. But the troubles which sprang from Agadir and the Italian-Turkish campaign fixed our eyes outwards, and especially on Germany, whose attitude, despite the recent understanding, was, to say the least of it, puzzling. France really wished to tread a conciliatory and loyal line as regards her neighbours, but every day brought fresh proof that French concessions had done nothing to appease German nationalism. The Emperor himself had on the 7th of February made a speech from the throne which, if not quite so aggressive as the famous " dry powder " oration, was anything but suggestive of an entente with France. In announcing an increase to his naval and military forces, William II. trumpeted forth that his Empire must be strong enough to defend at any moment its national honour, prosperity and interests. " I insist on the maintenance and increase, on land and sea, of our national defence force, rich

as it is in young men capable of bearing arms : if you will help us to carry out this noble duty you will be rendering a great service to the Fatherland." When the Kaiser, in his *Tableaux d'histoire*, said that in August 1912 I had promised the Czar of Russia to institute three years' service with the colours, he was drawing on his own imagination ; but why did he forget to tell us that six months earlier he had himself taken the initiative in augmenting the German army ? Unfortunately for him, those troublesome Nationalists made full play with " military service " ; unlike official speakers, they took no trouble to cook their utterances, which were of the crudest. The *Berlin Post* of the 28th January wrote :

" What men have the chief place in the German heart ? Goethe, Schiller, Wagner, or Marx ? Oh no ! Barbarossa, Friedrich the Great, Blücher, Moltke, Bismarck, the men of blood and iron, are the men who appeal to us most ; they did just what we ought to be doing now, and yet our people hesitate while each individual knows that the nation as a whole wants safety by attack."

True, the Emperor, on his birthday, had told our Ambassador that the Senate in approving the Franco-German Convention had lifted a great weight off his chest. But after the debate on the Treaty, Bethmann-Hollweg, a constant reader of our *Journal Officiel*, complained to Cambon of the language " of certain orators who were aware of the responsibilities of the Government and who might be called upon to know them better still ". The German Chancellor evidently alluded to Clemenceau and Pichon, and he had to be reminded by Cambon that underlying the material and territorial subjects debated, there was the sense of outrage due to the menace of the *Panther* at Agadir.

" You made a big mistake there," our Ambassador said, " but you made a bigger one in not withdrawing your ship when negotiations were afoot ". " I agree with you," the Chancellor replied ; " but then would you have renewed negotiations if we had not shown our hand ? " " Certainly," said Cambon, " but it was you, and you only, who made a fount of bitterness spring from what was calculated to sweeten feelings between our two countries ". On the day

I received Cambon's telegram describing this conversation, Lanken came to see Paléologue on a so-called private matter and expressed himself as disagreeably surprised that French opinion was so inimical to Germany. "I was promised", he said, "last November [he did not say by whom] that if I would consent to intervene with Kiderlen to obtain the recall of the *Panther* I should be allowed—as proof of French goodwill—to arrange about the Meurville mine [a mine situated in France and owned by Germans who were asking for certain privileges]; now this matter is not yet arranged and the Imperial Government is going to refuse a similar request to two French companies who own mines in Germany, and something like reprisals will be the consequence". It was always a case of blowing hot and cold, of shaking hands with you at one moment, and shaking a fist in your face the next. Early in March Jules Cambon was told that the Emperor, who had given him the Red Eagle in 1909, now wished to confer on him a higher distinction to mark the 4th of November. Our Ambassador expressed his thanks for this sign of Imperial benevolence, but thought it better for the moment he should not accept any decoration which might be adversely commented on in France.

Herr Kiderlen assumed great surprise at such susceptibility; our Ambassador suggested he had only himself to thank for it, and that the new military proposals put out on the morrow of the ratification of our Treaty were not likely to set our minds at ease. Kiderlen was just beginning to explain that Germany was only replying to provocation she had received, when Jules Cambon begged him to change the subject for fear of either of them saying anything unpleasant. Our Ambassador wrote to me that the new military proposals were evidently intended as a warning to England, but with England in the corner of her eye, Germany was really addressing herself to France. The Emperor, however, graciously accepted an invitation to dine at our Embassy, stayed on till after midnight, and talked incessantly and most affably; all this did not prevent his host telling me that his illustrious guest, however disposed

personally to peace, was increasingly under the influence of soldiers and courtiers bent on war.

It was now that one Charles Réné, or Ronné, a German subject, and formerly a minor Government official—a type of the eighteenth-century agents who were wont to tap Cabinet secrets—tried to involve the French Embassy in another of the intrigues which had recently been traced to undesirable intermediaries. This person had, according to his story, been sounded by one of our compatriots as to a definite rapprochement between France and Germany, and he had said in reply that although Alsace-Lorraine could not be given back, a genuine understanding would result in a large measure of autonomy for those provinces. Réné had confided his hopes to one of the Embassy Secretaries, and had hinted that a Secretary of State, Herr Zimmerman, while believing the rapprochement a little remote, would not object to discussing terms. He was listened to politely, and after a few days came back to say that Zimmerman wished him not to renew the subject for a while, but to wait for some official overture from France. Cambon saw at once the trap laid, and I wrote myself to him: "If we were to listen to such proposals as those of M. Réné, we should get into a mess with England and Russia, we should lose any benefit to be derived from the policy which we have so long followed, we should only secure for Alsace very illusory advantages, and we should find ourselves the next day isolated, weakened and out of court".

The same day, in a letter which crossed mine, Cambon told me that he desired the attaché to have no more parley with M. Réné, who might read into further conversations something of our approval. A month later, Réné interviewed the Ambassador himself and expressed the hope that something useful might be derived from his talk, and expressed at the same time his great dislike for Herr Kiderlen. The Agadir coup, he suggested, was not a bluff, but a sheer bit of provocation which Kiderlen, after making a few concessions, would renew. Réné ingenuously urged us to avoid this trap and to walk with the utmost caution. Kiderlen, he repeated, was not a pupil of Bismarck,

but a disciple of de Holstein, that enemy to France whom the Kaiser dismissed. Cambon displayed a cautious politeness in listening to his interviewer's proposals, which, however, he dismissed with the smoke of his cigar.

In a letter of the 28th July, Jules Cambon wrote to me : " Alsace-Lorraine is the foundation on which the German Empire has been built ; it is not likely that the Confederate States would ever give independence to the Reichsland, and the autonomy of the Reichsland in the Empire would not be a quietening factor ". A violent tirade from the Imperial lips was soon to show how shrewd was Cambon's diagnosis, and how windy were any suggestions like those of Réné. For the moment the Emperor's holiday at Corfu gave us a short respite. The Chancellor, before going to spend a few days with his Sovereign, came to dinner at our Embassy and remarked on the excellent effect which had been produced in Germany by the Emperor having been the Ambassador's guest, but he said French opinion was unduly sensitive, the more so as nothing which the French Government complained of would have happened but for the adventure to Fez. " That is not the question," Cambon replied ; " the burning question is whether your military plans are not immediately directed against us. A German statesman has openly said that in case of war between England and Germany, France would foot the bill. The Pan-Germanic press has developed this theme, which is as offensive as unforgettable ; the appearance of forcing us is what we cannot stand." Herr Bethmann-Hollweg nodded his head as if he approved, and then, in his attempt to justify the military measures, said that France enlisted up to her last recruitable man, while Germany left out every year 90,000 men fit to bear arms. " Surely there is no harm ", he suggested, " in our recruiting 29,000 of these ". " France ", retorted Cambon, " does not see things from that angle ; she is only concerned with the rock fact that two new Army Corps are to be created ". The Chancellor now shook his head, and blandly said that the Imperial Government was absolutely and resolutely bent on peace. " I assure you that no war will ever occur between us unless you yourself declare it."

One wonders if this assurance recurred to the Chancellor two years later.

The same evening, and in another conversation on the 31st March, Bethmann-Hollweg complained of the tone of some of the French military journals, which as a matter of fact I had asked Millerand to try and check. M. Cambon could anyhow reply with a neat *tu quoque*, for some of the German military sheets were not only bellicose, but inaccurate, and he could put his finger on a paragraph in the *Lokal Anzeiger*, which alluded to a wholly imaginary credit of 900 million francs supposed to have been asked for by our War Minister; if the correspondent of this Berlin journal continued to put about false news, he proposed to ask me to have him expelled from France. If Cambon, who was nothing if not cool-headed, pressed home his remarks so sharply, it was because he knew the Government to which he was accredited was less pacific in fact than in phrase.

In April the Reichstag was discussing the new military laws; the peace effectives were to be increased from 610,000 to 653,000, which, with 30,000 officers, would show a permanent total of 683,000 soldiers with the colours. The Chancellor, according to his habit, sought to obtain the necessary votes not *à la* Bismarck but rather by offering no threats and by not painting the state of Europe in too black colours. He simply explained that a great country like Germany must have as strong an army as possible, not only to repel any possible attack, but to ensure her situation in time of peace and to guarantee her prosperity. "Wars", he remarked, "are often neither desired nor provoked by Governments; it is rather the nation which sometimes flings itself into a struggle. The future no one can predict. When in 1910–1911 we framed the law of the military quinquennial, nobody could foresee that while we were labouring to reconcile international differences dangerous complications would arise, complications which have compelled us to consider whether we ought to leave unused a portion of our military forces." The War Minister, General Heeringen, was more explicit and more emphatic. "Between our last military legislature and the present, there lies the

experience of a year which has proved that the increase which we then made is insufficient." Thus the idea ran in Germany that with a larger army a better bargain would have been made than was to be found in the Treaty; and the Agadir coup might well be repeated, and with greater success. A strange way of thanking France for her moderation, or of building up a temple of Peace! The report which our Military Attaché, Colonel Pellé, wrote in May, was a further eye-opener if any such were required.

"' The feeling of wounded pride and resentment provoked by the events of 1911 is far from being appeased; the Socialists themselves are not happy about the Treaty. Discontent arises, less from the loss of all hope about Morocco, than from the annoyance due to Germany, after her blazing out at Agadir, being obliged to come to terms with a nation which the ultra-Imperialists consider as wholly secondary. This 'secondary' nation has stood up to them, and the Kaiser and the Kaiser's Government have had to give way. This is an unpardonable offence which public opinion insists must not occur again. It is the support of England which has enabled France to put her back up; the Liberal Prime Minister has disappointed the German hopes reposed in him, and the diplomatic steps taken to set afoot an Anglo-German Entente have come to nothing. To this disillusion, and to wounded *amour propre*, must be added the anxiety as to a cordon being set round Germany, and the fear of a coalition which may serve to bar the road to the legitimate expansion of the Empire. One knows perfectly well that if the Germans really want peace, they do not expect to derive it from mutual concessions or standardised armaments; they want to be feared. I have often noticed that any depreciation of the German army, such as may be found in Colonel Repington's articles, is regarded here as an incitement to war. Uneasiness and even nervousness are to be traced in the decision of the military authorities to date their new creations from the 1st October next. The same anxiety has evidently dominated the deliberations on the services in the Reichstag, has stiffened a tottering Government, and effected a temporary junction of the Bourgeois parties. By anxiety, I do not mean anxiety as to the result of a war; the Germans have no idea of defeat. Their belief in their military superiority is a dogma too firmly held not to have survived even the disappointments of the last year. Hence the rather cheap accusation of weakness levelled against the Emperor; for the future, confidence in the

army will grow with the sacrifices which are being made for its efficiency."

Germany, Colonel Pellé reminded us, was supremely conscious of her supremacy in arms; her military experts were sure that our High Command would be paralysed by the strokes of the Central Powers, that our Commissariat was non-existent, our discipline lax, and that strikes and sabotage would hold up our deliveries of supplies.

He told us of General von Bernhardi's famous book which had just been published in which the "Might is Right" theory was lavishly laid down, and which pointed to war as the only means for Germany to spread and sun herself as she rightly desired. The volume had of course been more than well received, and the author had given point to his written word, by telling his friends that the French General Staff was beneath criticism.

"The militant Nationalists", Colonel Pellé went on to say, "whom we wrongly dub Pan-Germans, are not a mere faction; they pervade the Conservative party, the Ministry of Marine, and the army officers. In a military nation like Prussia the army has strong political influence, and the military caste permeates the administrative services and forms the entourage of the Sovereign.

"The Crown Prince is the head of the militarists, and his unseemly demonstration in the Reichstag served, rather than injured, his popularity; the Emperor and the Chancellor, who wish to combine the expansion of the Empire with the maintenance of peace, are unpopular. Apparently the majority of Germans want peace, and at this moment the war party is in a small minority, but the general impression is that the situation may at any moment alter. The occasion—the match which may set the fire alight—is liable to arise from some strain between our two countries or from an external happening such as a Balkan crisis; but it will more likely be found in the blunders and insults inherent in a diplomacy which is clutching at different influences and which is athirst for revenge. The ruling policy here is that of the clenched fist, and, as the Turkish Ambassador said to me the other day, Germany wishes to be in such strength that the Government of the French Republic will not hesitate between the advantages of an alliance with England and the perils of a war with Germany. When the moment comes Germany wants to be able to say, 'Will you be with us, or

against us?' We may have no reason to fear war within the next eight or twelve months, but common prudence dictates that we should get to work at once, and silently, so that when the reprieve is over, we shall be prepared not only from the military but from the diplomatic and financial point of view."

Colonel Pellé was quite right. We must get to work without delay, but also without any chatter or swaggering display.

In a country so unhappily inspired as Germany was at this time, the Emperor may well have appeared, even to close observers, as a moderating element. But he was so impulsive, his tempers and his tantrums were so frequent, that with him a morning of smiles was more than likely to be followed by an afternoon of storm. On his return from Corfu the bright idea had occurred to him to make a sort of state entry into Strasbourg; this took place on the 13th of May and, smarting under his icy reception, Wilhelm delivered an after-luncheon speech addressed directly to Dr. Schwander, the town mayor, which showed up his real feeling as regards the inhabitants of the two Provinces, and which must have sadly disappointed René. The All-Highest professed himself unable to understand the hostility shown to Germany after he had been at such pains to give to Alsace-Lorraine a degree of autonomy; "if this frame of mind continues", he harshly said, "Alsace will be joined up with Prussia, and after having known me as amiable will find me quite the reverse". It was not only the mute hostility in the streets of Strasbourg which the Emperor resented; he was equally upset by the feeling excited when the big factory at Grafenstaden had been closed under his authority in order to please the Prussian Conservatives. The Government had reproached the Director for his political attitude and had told the company that unless they dismissed him they would get no more orders for locomotives. This had had a very ugly effect, and in the Landtag a unanimous vote of protest was passed.

The Emperor had not stopped at issuing a boycott, but had threatened Alsace with the withdrawal even of the "make believe" of liberty she enjoyed. How about the

doctrine that if France had been able to keep out of war she would sooner or later, under peace conditions, have recovered the lands torn from her side?

The Chancellor was horrified to hear of the Emperor's new affront, and Frau Hollweg herself blurted out to Jules Cambon, "it was so unexpected and so useless"—even the Socialists thought the Emperor had gone too far, and got up a debate in the Reichstag on the 23rd of May. The same thing had happened four years earlier, and Prince Bülow, who was then Chancellor—and whose dream was to be a British M.P.—had rather half-heartedly defended the Sovereign, and in appealing from Parliament to Kaiser had fallen between two stools and had been forced out of office.

The Chancellor now had to throw his own cloak over the Emperor. "I must protest energetically", he said in the Reichstag, "against the attacks levelled towards his Majesty; the Emperor has expressed a feeling of discontent which has been shared by a large number of Germans during these last few weeks". He was careful to add that his Sovereign had never thought of going outside the Federal Council or the Reichstag to revise, if revision were necessary, the constitution of Alsace-Lorraine, but if he threw this verbal sop to the constitutional scruples of some of the members he took over for himself all the Imperial strictures; "the Federal Council and the Reichstag", he declared, "if forced to certain decisions, would only be impelled by the interests of the Empire; it is for Alsace and Lorraine to make up their minds whether their lot is served by a consolidation of their autonomy, and by the freedom given to their Province, or whether they are asking for a close restriction of their liberty. No one can shut his eyes to the fact that there are to be found throughout the Reichsland, tendencies which are anti-German; every German worth the name ought to combine against such and set things right. This, and His Majesty's care for the future of the Reichsland, were the sum and substance of the Emperor's serious warning. Was he wrong to utter it? No—and on this point the whole nation is of one mind. Alsace-Lorraine belongs to us just as much as any other part of our country. If, as I cannot for a moment suppose,

disaffection and disturbances are excited, the Federal Council and the Reichstag would have to put its foot down heavily. The honour of Germany will compel them to do this."

The text and tone of this pronouncement witnessed that the Chancellor—like the Emperor—was under no illusions as to the Germanisation of Alsace and Lorraine, but that—also like his Sovereign—he viewed askance anything to bring them under French influence, nor would be give a grain more liberty than was doled out in the Constitution of the 31st of May 1911, and he even regretted this slender allowance.

On the same day when the Reichstag was deliberating, the Second Chamber in Alsace passed unanimously a resolution—which had been brought forward before the Emperor's outburst — claiming complete autonomy, the creation of a confederate State, and permission for Alsace and Lorraine to have a common National flag—a resolution to be flung into the Berlin waste-paper basket. In reaffirming his Imperial master's admonition Bethmann-Hollweg had secured an easy success. The National Liberals and the Left groups, who generally saw eye to eye with the Socialists, promptly gave them the slip, and the Chancellor roped in almost the entire Assembly for a vote which had at least the merit of precision. "Alsace-Lorraine is, and will remain, part of the Empire"; an affirmation which was not new and which since 1871 Germany had repeated in parrot-like tone. In face of this quite manifest and inflexible determination of Germany, what had been through long years the policy of France? In the pithy phrase of Baron de Courcel, "To keep the existing peace, and to bide one's time", or, as Gambetta said, "always to think of *it*, never to talk of it".

France was no whit illogical in piously preserving the memory of a bitter past, and at the same time, for the sake of peace and of humanity, in fending off any idea of a war of revenge. Nowhere was this feeling stronger than among those who lived on the frontier. A well-known German publicist, Herr Maximillian Harden, pointed to the

sons of dismembered Lorraine as above all others opposed to an appeal to the sword. "You can represent M. Poincaré", he told his compatriots, "as an instrument of every evil; but to say that he is the author of war, is easy for him to disprove. Poincaré never wishes his fair Lorraine to be turned once more into a battle scene."

No; certainly war was the last thing which I or any other Lorrainian, on either side of the frontier, sought for; we knew well enough the misery which a war, even if it had victory in its folds, would entail on our country. The very look of the works and fortifications, the heavy military charges which weighed on the district, incessantly reminded us that with France in arms against Germany a devasted country must be our lot; personal reasons no less than common sense warned us to do all and everything we could to preserve peace, but if Germany should march to the assault there would—and we never forgot this—devolve upon us a supreme duty; cost what it might we must fight until we could secure the liberation of the provinces of which we had been shorn. There was nothing contradictory in such sentiments, nor was there anything at which Germany could take umbrage if she herself were genuinely bent on peace and quietness.

But reports like those of Colonel Pellé were not reassuring, and everything we heard harmonised with what he told us. More and more Germany preened herself that she was destined to dominate the world, that the alleged superiority of her race, her constantly increasing population and economic pressure, gave her exceptional right in the comity of nations. Germany, as Paul Valéry truly said, was at once a fortress and a school, a huge workshop and a chain of enormous docks, and in this vast establishment a sort of inborn discipline bound up individual acts with the action of the whole country. When the military party should lay its hands on a perfected organisation would the fickle will of the Emperor be able to stay it? The Emperor—so Colonel Pellé told us—was becoming unpopular.

What more sinister threat to peace than an Emperor invested with something like absolute power, who knows, or

thinks himself, an object of dislike? And when that Emperor is vain, irritable, and fretfully jealous of his own glory, who can say how he would be affected by the drum-and-trumpet talk of a Crown Prince or the truculence of a Bernhardi?

I might tell myself over and over again that we must present our case for peace with the utmost courtesy as well as frankness, but I could not dismiss grave apprehension from my mind. Two phrases of Nietzsche constantly recurred to me, one to fit the German people, the other applicable to their Kaiser: "The Germans are a dangerous race; they indulge in something like national intoxication"; and "There is nothing more vulnerable, nothing more invincible, than human vanity; it even nourishes itself on its words and may rise to gigantic proportions".

We honestly tried to deal dispassionately with a passionate people; we did everything we knew to avoid offence to a Personage who was capable of making the misery of the world.

CHAPTER VI

The Entente Cordiale—Misunderstandings to be cleared up—Campaign against England—Good offices of Sir Francis Bertie—The Haldane mission—German tactics—New naval programme.

THERE was of course a line of policy which France might follow. If she wished to make Germany contented, she might cut herself off from her friends and allies, submit over and over again to something not unlike blackmail, cringe to every threat of force, and count only on right, without might, to make good her wrongs. Of course such a policy would at once have put France at the mercy of the Hohenzollerns; it would have been to repudiate everything we had tried to do since 1871, and to renounce openly any idea of eventual reparation for a great historic injustice; it would have meant the definite and final subordination of France, her moral and economic servitude, and her inevitable decline. The Government unanimously believed that instead of relaxing our external friendships we should, without in any way violating their strictly defensive character, do everything we could to consolidate them. This was the view which was voiced in Parliament, and no voice was raised here or elsewhere to contradict it.

My first care was for our relations with England, who in the crisis of 1911 had promptly placed herself alongside of France. It was nothing that on the 1st July, when de Selves proposed to send a warship to Mogador, to reply to the insult at Agadir, the British Cabinet was enjoying its habitual "week-end". It was enough that when it met again three days later, after Caillaux had vetoed his colleagues' proposal, Sir Edward Grey told Count Metternich, the German Ambassador, how England could not hold herself

aloof from the Moroccan question. England, he said, must first take account of obligations which issue from her treaties with France, and there is the further question of her own interests, which might well be affected by the dispatch of a German warship to Agadir. England cannot therefore recognise any engagement entered into without consulting her, and if—to suggest the impossible—France were to authorise Germany to instal herself at Agadir, Great Britain would forbid it. This felicitous frankness went far to facilitate our negotiations. If the Imperial Chancery had, in the first place, thought of dumping itself in the Souss to gratify Herr Classe and the Pan-Germanic League, she knew now that Great Britain would have something to say. The British Foreign Secretary, a few days later, had a further conversation with the German Ambassador, and did not hesitate to tell him that Germany must either come to terms with France, or a third Power would have to be dealt with. On the 21st July when this grave talk took place, Mr. Lloyd George—a statesman who was not supposed to have any exaggerated fondness for France, but who certainly had no wish to give Germany the key of the ocean—delivered at the Mansion House a solemn warning to the German Empire; three days later Count Metternich positively assured Sir Edward Grey that his country was not going to take any step in Morocco, but such was the fear of irritating the more noisy Nationalists that he begged the British Government not to publish what was a definite promise. After the rather stumbling explanation of Kiderlen in the Reichstag, Sir Edward Grey thought well to bring about a debate on foreign politics, and on the 27th November he explained the motives and laid down the conditions of a British intervention. England had evidently wished, at first, that France and Germany should agree between themselves, but found she could not stand aloof; and the Liberal Government, under Mr. Asquith, stood to the Conventions signed on the 8th April 1904 by the Conservative leader, Lord Salisbury. "By all means let us improve our relations with Germany", Sir Edward Grey said, "but we cannot let go our old friendships".

While negotiations were running their course, an awkward incident was brought to my knowledge by de Selves and the British Ambassador. Caillaux in the course of a conversation bluntly said to Sir Francis Bertie, "After all, alliances and friendships are things very capable of modification". Sir Francis asked curtly whether this remark should be referred to the British Government, broke off the talk, and hastened to express to de Selves his surprise and indignation. The Foreign Minister in alluding to this interview (when on oath before the High Court of Justice) said he had begged the Ambassador not to read anything malignant into a phrase used—and used in purely private talk—by an excitable and highly-strung man; he had stoutly reaffirmed the value we placed on our entente with Britain, and his long friendship with Sir Francis had served him well to allay some very natural irritation. He had urged the Ambassador to consider the incident as closed, and even begged that it should not be reported to the British Cabinet. Sir Francis had been good enough to say that he would not attach undue weight to what was evidently a hasty and irresponsible remark, and had evidently spoken in the same tone to the President. Seven years later, Caillaux tried to explain away his comment to Sir Francis: "I have no recollection of it", he declared; "but if you remember my intimacy—despite an occasional fit of sulks—with Sir Francis, and how we spoke not in French but in English, you may take it that any rather accentuated remark was due to something said to me. If—as I now learn for the first time—the Ambassador lodged a complaint, he did not explain how my words were provoked, and anyhow neither the Foreign Minister nor the President of the Republic ever questioned me on the matter."

Sir Francis Bertie remembered nothing which could excuse so unhappy a remark from a responsible Minister, and one has only to peruse his *Diary* to be sure that his "intimacy" with Caillaux did not prevent his alluding to him in terms of distinct antipathy. I was therefore obliged, in January 1912, to assure our Ambassador—who was heart and soul in the entente—that, like Sir Edward

Grey, we had no friendships to barter. Sir Francis, so far as I was concerned, always made official tasks easy by his perfect frankness and his no less perfect courtesy, and I see him now with his pink complexion, his white, wavy hair, his lips and nostrils delicately quivering as he lent to his questions a satirical flavour which did not disguise their sound common sense.

I had no sooner constituted my Cabinet than I begged M. Paul Cambon to give Sir Edward Grey explicit assurance of our determination to adhere to the principles which, since the Agreement of 1904, had dictated French policy towards Great Britain, and through Sir Francis I had received a message of thanks couched in the kindest terms. But on the 21st January the British Ambassador came to the Quai d'Orsay, and in the most friendly manner told me that during the last three months some unwise things had been said and done and that consequently proposals which the two Governments had made to one another had been exaggerated and exploited by the pro-German party in England, who had hung on them a pretext to decry the Entente Cordiale; Sir Francis begged me to write direct to Sir Edward Grey and reassure him as to the feelings of the new Cabinet. I at once told Paul Cambon of this and enclosed a letter addressed to Sir Edward Grey, leaving it to his discretion whether or not to hand it to the Secretary of State. Cambon thought the letter most opportune, and wrote to me: "Sir Francis Bertie is quite accurate, for a campaign has been started against Sir Edward, who is accused of having exposed England to the risk of war for the sake of the *beaux yeux* of France at the precise moment when we are supposed to be coming to a secret understanding with Berlin". Neither Sir Francis nor Cambon had in any way exaggerated the sensitiveness of British opinion, and Count de Lalaing, the Belgian Minister in London, wrote to his Foreign Minister (15th January 1912) that the revelations which had brought about the crisis in France had been very distasteful to the British Government. It was thought that the French Prime Minister had gone outside the Foreign Office and his colleagues to treat with Berlin, and that this had placed

the English Ministers awkwardly, as they had linked up British interests with France, and were loth to admit any breach of etiquette, let alone of procedure. A good deal of point, he added, has been given to the impression that M. Caillaux secretly favoured a policy of excessive concession towards Germany; and this was the more deplorable as it had oozed out that the British Government's loyalty to the French had resulted in considerable tension between London and Berlin.

Whether this little bout of British fretfulness was significant or not, I must not ignore it, but try to allay it. Here I was quite hopeful; Sir Edward Grey had replied to my letter in the kindest possible way; he had assured me that with the entente always in his mind he would keep in closest touch with the French Government. He kept his word to the letter, and for our part, from end to end of my Premiership, everything we did was in concord with the British Cabinet. In this we were sure to be doing what France generally wished; in France the only out-and-out opponent to the Entente Cordiale was M. Judet, whose work on Georges Louis recently served German propaganda. Judet was then the director of the *Éclair*, and one need not go to the back files of the paper to learn the trend of his directorship. In 1923, when Judet—who had been banished for life by court-martial for having truck with the enemy—returned from Switzerland to France, he presented himself before the Cour d'Assize, which after his several years of exile had pronounced his acquittal. He proceeded to publish, in a work modestly entitled *My Politics*, some choice extracts from his earlier writings, and one has only to skim over this strange volume to recall the author's passionate campaign, not only against Clemenceau and Delcassé and President Loubet, "that other male-factor", but also against almost every English statesman.

To quote a few passages which throw light on his later polemic:

"With Russia alone, but without any falling away or lack of good faith, we were equipped to withstand the coaxing or the threats of England and Germany. Now we are more and

more doomed to follow Russia on her own line, or to link ourselves up with England in order to fight for her on the Continent." (25th July 1905.)

" All the English manœuvres tend to provoke the Germans and to offer them a duel without delay and without quarter." (28th July 1905.)

" The English are always bad Europeans." (4th September 1905.)

" The two Anglo-Saxon States are making their own arrangements as to their expansion on parallel lines. There is an old proverb 'Blood is stronger than water', and the Anglo-Saxons are wise enough, while reserving themselves almost the whole of the globe, not to have any trouble amongst themselves." (23rd September 1905.)

" The circle which the English are seeking to draw round Germany will be the signal for the most frightful war of modern times, and our shoulders will carry most of the burden." (25th September 1905.)

" The *Post* emphasised England's intense desire to deal with Russia in respect of Constantinople. 'As England has given Morocco to M. Delcassé, so she will give Turkey to M. Witte.' " (1st October 1905.)

" How can we seek for an alliance with England which only suggests the certainty of war with Germany under the most unfavourable conditions? " (9th October 1905.)

" Lord Roberts knows perfectly well that the supreme effort of the War Office can only result in 250,000 men available for a continental war." (12th October 1905.)

" The Entente Cordiale is only attractive for the English if they receive everything and give nothing in return." (2nd December 1905.)

" England misses no opportunity of defying William II." (1st May 1906.)

" England's interventions in Russia and in France are on precisely the same lines. She favours the utmost docility on our part, and the same prescription for Russia." (22nd May 1906.)

" A military convention binds us up, thanks to which our neighbours wish to drag us into a big war if they succeed in exasperating Germany." (14th August 1906.)

" It is quite understood that if the King of England goes a little too far with his Imperial nephew, the dispute will be fought out in France." (15th September 1906.)

" We refused to take our revenge when it was possible and rational. A long line of Foreign Ministers—Waldeck, Combes,

Rouviet, Sanien, Clemenceau—have spelt for us a continuous decline, the gradual degradation of our armed forces, and the decrepitude of our Russian alliance. Happily Germany has been occupied in a new direction." (1st November 1906.)

" So long as King Edward VII. only imperils us, he can be perfectly happy." (28th April 1907.)

" The military Anglo-French Convention is an unexpectedly open door. For good or ill it leaves us under the orders and at the discretion of England, whenever her designs against Germany are finished." (6th July 1907.)

" England has but one object, to envenom perpetually the peace of 1870, and to render incurable Germany's incitation, while holding France at discretion by phantoms of gratitude for wholly imaginary services. Whatever happens at Vienna, it is not from that quarter that we need have any anxiety. Do not let us make any mistake about the centre of Europe ; it is in the North Sea that the decisive issues will be found." (11th October 1907.)

As soon as Russia drew near to England, Judet turned round on M. Isvolsky, then Foreign Minister.

" M. Isvolsky, having renounced his idea of a coup on the Yellow Sea or the Indian Ocean, has thought well—obviously in order to save his face—to pin his faith to British promises in the Near East, the Dardanelles and Constantinople. To promise is not to give ; but the British are always ready to give what is not theirs. England, in offering *carte blanche* to M. Isvolsky to debouch on to the Black Sea, was well aware that Russia would find Germany in her way. I should think that M. Isvolsky will think twice next time before treating *bona fide* with England." (15th February 1908.)

" The British Government is trying to pick in Turkey the quarrel which she was not able to get up in Morocco. England takes upon herself to dictate to the Porte reforms which she knows to be out of the question, and war is certainly her object." (27th February 1908.)

" To make good her aim, England is prodding Russia to renew the Pan-Slavic campaign which would end in our seeing again the Cross over St. Sofia." (1st May 1908.)

M. Isvolsky had indeed set himself, as soon as he took office, to reconcile Russia with England and Japan, and he had succeeded. The Russo-British Treaty of the 31st August 1907, with its agreement as to Persia, was made

known to the Powers before the end of September and was frowned on by the Kaiser no less than by Judet. Count Sacken, Russian Ambassador at Berlin, telegraphed to his chief in January 1909 :

" As regards the foreign policy of Germany—setting aside the Emperor's dislike of our friendliness with England and his reproaches for our ingratitude after his so-called leaning towards us in the Japanese war—there is no doubt but that his feelings may lead him into the camp hostile to the Slavs, and to join hands with Russia at the precise moment when we are at our lowest military strength."

M. Isvolsky was most certainly the Minister who drew England and Russia together, and if Judet disliked him, he disliked little less any one who did anything to cement the Anglo-French entente.

" Remember", he said, " that if the manœuvring of Clemenceau and Edward VII. results in bringing William II. to Nancy, it is not the British army which will help us." (22nd May 1908.)

" The toasts to the King of England and the President of the French Republic have produced a world-wide impression. According to well-informed Englishmen themselves, it is well the public should know that an entente, offensive and defensive, means war." (29th May 1908.)

" M. Isvolsky has treacherously made his country the victim of proverbial British duplicity ; he is the dupe and the plaything of Great Britain, and if we give ourselves up to England and her plan of campaign, we shall be treated by Germany as hostages."

" We are compromised in England's own affairs, and partners in her risks, without any share in her profits." (9th January 1909.)

" The Navy Estimates for 1911–12 are 94,720,000 francs more than the preceding year. Can there be better evidence that Britain is scenting war ? " (13th March 1911.)

And at the very moment when Agadir was on every one's lips, and when England was propping up France against Germany, Judet suggested an England become impotent :

" The serious strikes which have so violently shaken her, show how slender is the base on which she had poised herself during the last centuries ; at no moment has she ever been less

ready to wage a continental war. And we are against the entente in all its naïveté, because it may mean a war in which France will have all the risk and none of the benefits." (30th November 1911.)

Thus through seven years Judet let slip no occasion to "down" England, to accuse her of selfish imperialism, to decry her ambition, to suggest her as "spoiling for a fight", and at the same time to represent her as incapable of giving any solid military support to France. He insinuated all along that the French Government would do well to break away from her ally so that Germany could successfully "go for" Great Britain and then satisfy her soul in expansion. It did not occur to him, after defeating Great Britain at sea, Germany could swing round on France with far greater ease and far greater strength; while if, on the other hand, England were to be victorious without French co-operation, we should lose indefinitely every chance of securing her collaboration and help. A few weeks later, Judet, who had incessantly condemned not only the existing entente, but any idea of any alliance with England, affected to put in a plea for an alliance instead of an entente, but a "real" alliance, carefully considered, organised down to the last detail, and effected for life or death. This was, of course, only another attempt to depreciate existing arrangements, and was followed up by the remark: "If England speaks to us of an alliance, it must be something really effective and efficient, and no mere vague and problematic backing up. England has only offered us an opportunity of fighting for her advantage, without her incurring any loss"; and, "Putting things at their very best, one sees how much time is necessary for any real military revival in England; prudence should compel us to regard British support as non-existent".

It is amusing to remember that in 1925, Judet, with the Hamburg Committee for German Propaganda behind him, charged us with the precise evil deeds of 1912 of which in 1912 he accused England. His change of front was due to Germany seeking to lay responsibility for the war on our shoulders, so as to get the Versailles Treaty revised. There

was nothing inconsistent in this, as the jaundiced journalist was simply pursuing his policy of casting obloquy and reproach—if in an amended form—on the Triple Entente. From the first my Government took a diametrically opposite line to that suggested by Judet's vapourings, which unfortunately were not without setting up some irritation in England.

I set myself, therefore, not only to blow into dust any fragment of misunderstanding but to seize every opportunity of binding our interests more closely together.

After that February the Cabinet in London gave us here admirable proof of their confidence and *bona fides*, and this in respect of Lord Haldane's projected visit to Berlin. It was the German Emperor himself who had cleverly proposed this visit just when he was about to put to the vote his new naval programme, and when, to ensure the future of his country on the seas, he would have welcomed an arrangement with England as to parallel limitations of naval defence.

For some time there had been a silent struggle between England and Germany; the one was determined to retain, the other had set her teeth to secure, dominion of the sea. Early in 1909 the Russian Ambassador at Berlin telegraphed to his minister: [1] "The German navy is growing so quickly that it threatens the supremacy of England on the water and her safety in her island; theoretically the moment must come when the supremacy will pass from the one to the other; it is therefore well for England not to fold her arms until this happens, but to insist on the reduction of the German navy to a non-dangerous point to herself. One can quite understand Germany's fear of Great Britain. This fear—together with the general belief that England will not allow Germany to increase her fleet—is such that a very definite motion is afloat to obviate this danger from England by a sudden attack *à la japonaise* with thirteen dirigibles and the torpedo flotilla." From 1909 to 1912 there was a positive fever of Anglophobia in Berlin, and the champions of colonial and naval expansion, the Navy League,

[1] This telegram was suppressed in all German propaganda.

Admiral von Koester, and other important persons, did all they could to stir up a sort of " informed " agitation. Count Gersdorff gave to a volume the title *The War Plan of the British Fleet*; M. Hartmann published his *Peace or War with England*; the *Überall Review* devoted a special number to the rivalry of the two Protestant countries; the Minister of Marine himself, inspired by Admiral von Tirpitz, authorised an issue of the *Leipziger Illustrierte Zeitung*, in which appeared, illustrated by maps and diagrams, a supposed plan of attack by the British Fleet against the German coasts, and this bogey was dangled before the eyes of the Emperor, who, to judge by his correspondence with his august Russian cousin, needed no stimulant for his hatred of England. A few weeks later the Emperor expressed a wish to commune with a member of the English Cabinet, and the Secretary of State for War, who from his early association was supposed to have German leanings, travelled to Berlin.

In his *Tableaux d'histoire* the Kaiser does not say that Lord Haldane's German trip was his own idea, but Sir Edward Grey was told so, and repeated the information to Paul Cambon. The British Government thought it better not to repulse roughly what might have been Imperial overtures, and, as Lord Haldane's brother was about to visit Berlin, Sir Edward asked the War Minister to go there also in order to explore the ground. The Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office, Sir Arthur Nicolson, viewed this proposed visit with something more than disfavour, and did what he could to prevent it. He thought—and said—that Lord Haldane could scarcely make so noticeable a journey without setting the political world agog, and that if he were to experience any rebuff or failure, England would be put in a false position. But Sir Edward, who, in the preceding months, had marked with anxiety the clouds on the political horizon, and who, despite any insinuations to the contrary either in Berlin or London, hungered for peace, would not let slip any chance, however slender, of coming to a practical agreement. Nor must it be forgotten that there was among the large majority of Government

supporters a little faction of extremists who reproached the Prime Minister with having been willing to make Morocco a *casus belli* with Germany, and that it was thought desirable to do something which might close the mouths of disaffected grumblers. The War Minister left for Berlin on the 6th February, taking with him an eminent financier, Sir Ernest Cassel, to whom many doors were open. Sir Edward Grey was kind enough to send me word of this semi-official mission. "Lord Haldane", he told M. Cambon, "is deputed by the Government to see the Chancellor, and also the Emperor, and to satisfy himself as to whether the recent proposals of the Imperial Government are, or are not, serious. Lord Haldane must also try to glean all the information he can about the Bagdad Railway. But there is no question whatever of any sort of negotiation or treaty; we want to know what are the genuine intentions of the German Government, and more particularly as to the naval programme they are going to put forward."

On the 9th February Sir Edward Goschen, British Ambassador at the Court of Berlin, called on our representative, Jules Cambon, and gave him details which he had just learnt from the British War Minister, and which confirmed exactly what Sir Edward Grey had said. He had stated that if there should come about some agreement with respect to the limitation of armaments, he would rigidly respect the existing standards recognised by the navies of both countries, and would in no sort of way disturb the Entente Cordiale. Lord Haldane had himself paid a visit to Cambon, and had given him the same information, which our Ambassador hastened to convey to me.

But on the 10th February, the day before Lord Haldane was due to leave Berlin, the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Right Hon. Winston Churchill, made a striking speech at Glasgow, where he left no room to suppose that the pourparlers would have any result. He declared that England was absolutely obliged to maintain her supremacy at sea, and added that whereas the Fleet was of vital necessity to the British Empire, it could only be regarded as a luxury for

Germany. The reason for this burning apostrophe was not far to seek, and two days later Paul Cambon learnt it from Sir Edward Grey, and lost no time in repeating it to me. The Foreign Secretary told our Ambassador that the idea of Lord Haldane's journey did not originate with the Cabinet in Downing Street. It was the German Emperor himself who had expressed the desire to see a member of the British Government who would throw full light on the situation.[1] William II. had displayed a very strong wish that Sir Edward Grey should come himself, but Sir Edward wisely opined that his presence in Berlin—even if pronounced unofficial—would set too many tongues wagging. He therefore made his excuses, and asked Lord Haldane to take his place. The War Minister had interviews with the Chancellor, with M. de Stummer, and Kiderlen, and had also been granted an audience of the Emperor; curiously enough, Kiderlen, who, in spite of some rather strong hints, had been the foremost of the Peace Party around the Throne, was not present at any of the official interviews, and it seemed as if any influence he had had was largely discounted. The Chancellor and Lord Haldane had protested with equal eagerness the conciliatory intentions of their respective Governments, but Lord Haldane did not hesitate to say that if Germany were to attack any other Power the British Government would reserve to itself all liberty of action, and he laid special emphasis on this when alluding to the tension which the year before had arisen between France and Germany. Some discussion followed as to the limitation of navies. The Chancellor showed himself not indisposed to come to some compromise. Lord Haldane was quite clear that the existing relative standards must be respected, but the question of curtailing armaments had not been gone into, and the conversation did not go outside generalities. With regard to the Bagdad line, which

[1] In his *Twenty-five Years*, Lord Grey is a little less positive as to the Emperor's initiative than he was in his conversation. The invitation, he says, was not addressed to him but to the Cabinet Ministers, who might have welcomed it: he adds that he was never quite sure whether the invitation came from an English or a German source. But several of his colleagues represented the matter to him as a wish of the Kaiser.

had for so long been a subject of lively discussion, the Chancellor had vaguely declared himself ready to recognise England's peculiar interest in the Persian Gulf and over the section of the railway which would debouch into it. Here again, however, there was no attempt to cross the " t's " or dot the " i's ". As a set-off to the benevolent attitude which he flattered himself he exhibited to Lord Haldane, the German Chancellor was hardy enough to suggest the cession by England to Germany of Zanzibar and Pembar. Sir Edward Grey told Cambon that this proposal of a colonial barter did not appear to the British Government as worthy of consideration, and our Ambassador, when relating to me his conversation, told me it was quite evident that the Chancellor had shown a strange ignorance of psychology. On Wednesday, the 14th February, in the debate on the Address, Mr. Bonar Law questioned the Prime Minister regarding the mysterious mission of Lord Haldane. Mr. Asquith unhesitatingly replied : [1]

" The right hon. gentleman referred to the recent visit of my noble friend Lord Haldane to Berlin. I think he used the expression ' Limelight '. As the charge which has been brought against us, particularly against my right hon. friend (Mr. Churchill), is that of furtiveness and secrecy, it is rather a relief to be accused of carrying on our diplomatic proceedings in anything so illuminating as limelight. This is a serious matter. It is an undoubted, as it is a most lamentable, fact that the traditional feelings of friendship and goodwill between Germany and this country have during the last few months been seriously overclouded. . . . We are told, for instance—(I am obliged to the right hon. gentleman for giving me an opportunity of making this statement)—that there are masses of people in Germany who firmly believe that, at some time or times during the summer and autumn of last year, we were meditating and even preparing for an aggressive attack upon their country. . . . But the very fact that such rumours could find credence, not, indeed, with the German Government, but in the minds of large numbers of intelligent and fair-minded people in Germany, is surely in itself a significant and most regrettable circumstance. Both Governments, the German Government and our own, have

[1] House of Commons, Wednesday, 14th February 1912, official report, vol. 4, No. 1.

been, and are, animated by a sincere desire to bring about a better state of understanding, and, in the course of last month, we had an intimation that the visit of a British Minister to Berlin would not be unwelcome and might facilitate the attainment of our common object. My noble friend and colleague, Lord Haldane, was in any case going sooner or later to Germany on business connected with the London University Commission, and in the circumstances we thought it well—and I doubt whether anybody would say we were ill advised—that he should hasten his visit and take advantage of it to engage in friendly and confidential communications with those who are responsible for the control and guidance of German policy. This involved, I agree, upon both sides a departure from conventional methods, but upon both sides it was felt that frankness of statement and communication would be easier, in the first instance, if it was a question of informal and non-committal rather than what I might call full-dress diplomatic negotiations. These anticipations have been completely realised. There was perfect freedom of statement and frankness of explanation over a wide area of discussion. . . . I cannot, of course, at this stage, venture upon any prediction or enter into any anticipation, but I may say that in the course of my noble friend's visit there was unmistakable evidence of a sincere and resolute desire upon both sides to establish a better footing without sacrificing or impairing the special relationship to which each of us stands towards other Powers."

While the two Governments plodded on with their conversations, Germany stuck to her pet design. She sought to obtain a promise of British neutrality whenever she should declare war against any nation, and the nation in her mind was France; the British Cabinet, on the other hand, clung to its liberty of action, and negotiations were eventually broken off. Sir Edward Grey lost not a moment in letting Cambon know this, and I begged our Ambassador to thank the British Government for their entire loyalty. On the 27th March Sir Francis Bertie came to see me and began: "Will you allow me to forget for a moment that I am an Ambassador?" "I will forget it myself, if you like", I said. He then proceeded: "Sir Edward Grey writes to me that you and M. Paul Cambon are both fully satisfied with our assurances as to the declaration of neutrality which Germany has asked for. I am just a little surprised that you

take this so easily. If no declaration has been given, it doesn't follow necessarily that it has been altogether brushed aside. What Germany asked of us was not a simple promise of neutrality, but a definite engagement to observe a benevolent neutrality: a ridiculous notion, as a benevolent neutrality is no longer pure neutrality. However preposterous this demand, Sir Edward Grey must have full praise for having blankly refused it—he is, as a matter of fact, surrounded by colleagues of whom several have leanings towards Germany. This makes me feel a little uncomfortable; it is imperative that this declaration of neutrality shall not be made, and there is some risk of it if the German Government returns again and again to the charge. It may be true that we are only asked to be neutral in the event of Germany being attacked; but who can say that the day may not arrive when France, irritated beyond measure and threatened by Germany, will not be forced to take the offensive? No, believe me, it will not do for M. Paul Cambon to appear satisfied, and if only you speak resolutely to London, the British Government will do more than hesitate before committing the blunder which I dread." Of course I gave Cambon a chapter and verse account of this interview, and begged him to re-examine the whole question with the Foreign Secretary without giving away Sir Francis Bertie. "We have put our trust in England", I reminded him; "although the two Governments are bound by no written convention we have allowed our General Staff to be in close touch with the British General Staff, and thus to impart to them our military plans. We do not ask—we never have asked—the British Government to deprive itself of its full liberty of action in order to please us, but we do ask that it should not thus deprive itself to our detriment by a promise of neutrality which would only stimulate Germany to fresh provocatory tactics." Cambon saw Sir Edward Grey at once and hoisted the danger flag, and during the Easter holidays M. de Fleuriau, as Chargé d'Affaires, made it his business to talk things over with the Permanent Under-Secretary, and to emphasise some of the arguments his Government adduced; a declaration of

neutrality would doubtless be exploited by Germany, who would endeavour to profit by it in driving a wedge between England and France; the game of the Germanophiles would be played for them in the publication of any document on either side of the Channel; something would be done to sap the Entente Cordiale. If war were to break out between France and Germany, the Germanophile English would favour Germany and preach their gospel of neutrality in the Press, in Parliament and perhaps in the Cabinet; there would anyhow be a delay of precious time for the Government. The phrase "England shall make no unprovoked attack upon Germany", from which issued the whole project of declaration, was in itself dangerous because it might be difficult on the given day to determine at once the precise provocation.

Sir Arthur Nicolson appeared to understand these points perfectly, and, as far as he was concerned, told M. de Fleuriau that the Government had only continued the discussion with Count Metternich to ease their consciences, but that nothing would come of it.

Germany soon saw that neutrality was for the moment "off", and Paul Cambon wrote to me on the 10th April that we had good reason to congratulate ourselves. "In Germany", he said, "Von Tirpitz and his party are hand in glove with the financiers and business men who have been spurred by the Emperor to throw themselves into colonial enterprises. This party wishes to keep clear of all British entanglements, and it takes so lightly the theme of limitation of armaments that on the very day after Metternich's proposals were finally turned down, the German naval estimates were laid before Parliament; it is quite clear that Admiral Tirpitz never believed for a moment that anything would come from any Anglo-German arrangement." Cambon was much relieved, and Sir Arthur Nicolson told him that Sir Edward Grey was not less so. But our Ambassador quite agreed with me that we ought to take advantage of what had just happened to buttress the Entente Cordiale with some precise formulæ. "M. Poincaré", Cambon observed to Sir Arthur, "has one weak point in his position;

he is the arch-champion of the entente with England, but it is difficult for him to disguise from men of public importance, no less than from colleagues in his Cabinet, that there is something between us a little stronger than abstract sympathy. The two Governments may rest quite happy in their mutual understanding, but this does not suffice for public opinion, and the opponents of England in France (there are not many but there are a few) say aloud that our relations with you do not present any security. I ask myself therefore if we could not put our heads together and find some formula which would enable us to reassure any who are uneasy or incredulous. I know that your Government has no right to enter into any engagement without the authority of Parliament, but there is no need of any signed and sealed treaty; we could be perfectly contented with the simple exchange of declarations. This is what we should have done in 1905 with Lord Lansdowne, if the dismissal from office of M. Delcassé had not cut short our conversation." Sir Arthur would personally have strongly favoured some such arrangement, but he said that his Chief could not conclude even a bargain like this without referring to the Cabinet, and he was pretty sure that certain Ministers, who were in touch with the Labour Party, would refuse to enter into any engagement of the sort. For the moment things remained thus, but a few months later Cambon, on my instructions, made a further attempt which was not without some result.

The Anglo-German discussions meanwhile were not altogether discarded, but became comparatively colourless and dealt with suggested exchanges of territory in South Africa. At no moment did Great Britain say or do a single thing of which the German Empire could complain, and one might contrast two rabid articles in the *Deutsche Review*, over the signatures of two distinguished admirals, with Lord Haldane's eulogy of the Kaiser at the Annual Dinner of the German Hospital and Mr. Alfred de Rothschild's plea in the *Daily Chronicle* of the 29th June for complete accord "between the first Naval Power and the first Military Power in the world". The Cabinet itself took meticulous care not

to wound the *amour propre* of representative Germans, and thought it well for the time being to give no details of their pourparlers, either to the English Press or to ourselves. Only later, when Germany was trying to pin responsibility for the war to England, and when the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* inserted a semi-official article as to the Anglo-German negotiations, did the Foreign Office put out a statement which finally revealed the 1912 plots and calculations of the Imperial Government.[1]

Sir Edward with his usual loyalty published the precise proposal made to Lord Haldane by the Imperial Chancellor, and added:

"These conditions, although in appearance fair, would have been grossly unfair and one-sided in their operation. Owing to the general position of the European Powers and the treaty engagements by which they were bound, the results would have been that while Germany, in the case of a European conflict, would have remained free to support her friends, this country would have been forbidden to raise a finger in defence of hers. Germany could arrange without difficulty that the formal inception of hostilities should rest with Austria. If Austria and Russia were at war, Germany would support Austria, as is evident from what occurred at the end of July 1914; while as soon as Russia was attacked by two Powers, France was bound to come to her assistance. In other words, the pledge of neutrality offered by Germany would have been absolutely valueless, because she could always plead the necessity of fulfilling her existing obligation under the Triple Alliance as an excuse for departing from neutrality. On the other hand, no such departure, however serious the provocation, would have been possible for this country, which was bound by no Alliance with the exception of those with Japan and Portugal, while the making of fresh Alliances was prohibited by Article 5. In a word, there was to be a guarantee of absolute neutrality on one side, but not on the other. It was impossible for us to enter into a contract so obviously inequitable, and the formula was accordingly rejected by Sir Ed. Grey."

The Foreign Office statement showed how Sir Edward Grey had consented to resume conferences with Count Metternich, conferences in which he had shown unerring

[1] 1st September 1915.

tact and inexhaustible patience. But he had crossed inevitably Germany's darling wish at once to weaken the Entente Cordiale and to reserve for herself full liberty to do what she pleased on the Continent, and Hollweg finally said that as an Anglo-German Agreement seemed impossible, the new Navy Law would take its course under the conditions submitted to the Federal Council. The situation was later illuminated by Mr. Winston Churchill,[1] who was at that time First Lord of the Admiralty :

" The new Navy Law was still a secret to the British and German nations alike, but knowing as I did its scope and character and viewing it in conjunction with the Army Bill, I sustained a strong impression at this moment of the approaching danger. . . . Mr. Haldane returned two days later (after the speech of Glasgow) from Berlin, and the Cabinet was summoned to receive an account of this mission. . . . Mr. Haldane brought back with him the actual text of the new German Navy Law, or *novelle*, as it was called. This had been handed to him by the Emperor during the course of the discussion. It was an elaborate technical document. Mr. Haldane had had the prudence to refrain to express any opinion upon it till it had been examined by the Admiralty experts. We now subjected this document to a rigorous scrutiny. The result more than confirmed my first unfavourable impression. The main feature in the new Law, I reported to the Cabinet on 14th February, is the extraordinary increase in the striking force of ships of all classes immediately available throughout the year. Whereas formerly we reckoned against 17 battleships, 4 battle cruisers and 12 small cruisers in the active battle fleet, demobilised to a great extent during the winter months, we must in future prepare against 25, 12 and 18, which are not to be subject to anything like the same degree of temporary demobilisation."

Mr. Churchill emphasised elsewhere the first-rate importance of Germany's naval construction at the very moment when she was asking England to promise neutrality, and it would seem that the Kaiser, after having brought all possible pressure to bear on France at Agadir, bethought himself to blackmail England. " Here is my naval programme ; if you want me to reduce it, you must guarantee me benevolent neutrality in the event of European war."

[1] *World-Crisis*, Vol. I. pp. 99-102.

England refused, no less out of loyalty to France than from the knowledge that to say "Yes" would be suicidal; she knew perfectly well that if she allowed France to be crushed, Germany, as mistress of the Continent, would be able to complete on the seas her full hegemony.

There were politicians and writers who regretted that in 1912 the three leading Ministers did not deem it wise to publish Germany's pretensions at the time of Lord Haldane's mission; perhaps these exaggerated a little what would have been the precise value of a complete unfolding of the negotiations, and one cannot but appreciate the line of complete discretion which the British Government thought right to tread. Even to us, all-confidential and all-friendly as their attitude was, the Foreign Office did not show their whole hand, and without the kindness of Sir Francis Bertie we might have been ignorant of some of the more important cards they held. But what certainly emerges from the post-war writings of leading statemen is that from February to March 1912 Germany sought to fetter England's freedom, that she offered her with one hand a threatening naval programme, and with the other a paper to sign, and that not having succeeded in making good her menace, she at once set herself to raise her navy to preposterous proportions. But if we were not informed at every point, we knew quite enough to discover for ourselves, in the labyrinth of her proposals, Germany's sinister intentions.

CHAPTER VII

Entente and Military Convention—Franco-British friendship—Prince of Wales in France—Fêtes at Nice and Cannes.

Our entente with England had for its accompaniment certain agreements come to between the General Staffs of the army and—after 1912—of the navy, although at no moment did England or France strip off any shred of their absolute liberty. On either side of the Channel there were, of course, antagonists of the entente who asserted that the British Government had irrevocably engaged itself with us ever since Lord Haldane entered into conversation with the French Military Attaché, and in France a youthful writer, M. Fabre Luce, who enjoyed imparting a veneer of logic to his ingenious paradoxes, gave to one of his chapters the title of " L'Angleterre enchaînée ". One has only to read Lord Haldane's *Before the War* to recognise that the two General Staffs, in their 1906–1913 conferences, treated of strategic plans as purely conditional, and that no sort of decision was registered as to any eventual action. This emerges just as clearly from Mr. Asquith's *Genesis of the War*, and Mr. Mackinnon Wood, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, was quite in his right to say on the 8th March 1911 that Great Britain was under no obligation to send any expeditionary force. Sir Edward Grey was no less accurate in reaffirming, a fortnight later, that the British Government had entered into no secret contract, and Mr. Asquith was on the same sure ground when at the end of the year he endorsed the statement of his colleague and denied that England had made any promise to France outside the arrangements of 1904.

Mr. Asquith knew that, in speaking thus, he used no

word which would wound us, as we were equally aware of the non-existence of any definite mutual obligation. In 1911, in the course of a conference between that excellent friend of France, General Wilson,[1] and General Dubail, "essential questions were discussed and certain precautions laid down to ensure, if occasion should arise, that co-operation between the coalition armies should be under the most workable conditions, and as effective as possible".

In the event of a German attack, a hypothetical arrangement had been come to among military experts as to the composition of an English expeditionary force, naval transport, landing and living on French territory, railway facilities, area of concentration and supplies. No sort of diplomatic Pact existed even of a defensive character, and while the two Governments were informed about the military conversations, they were in no way bound by them. One knew only too well that—even after the letters which passed on the 22nd of November 1912 between Paul Cambon and Sir Edward Grey—England up to the date of her declaration of war was free to fight or to stand aside, as might seem good to her. I would dearly have liked all this time to think that her hand was firm in ours, but although we always hoped to grasp it in the hour of our need, we could have no certainty. General Wilson, the arch-advocate as well as the exponent of close liaison, was sure—and he assured our General Staff—that if France were attacked England would come to her side; President Fallières, on the other hand, who liked cut-and-dried treaties, professed himself as a little sceptical, or, anyhow, far from optimistic.

In his effort to give the lie to the reiterated statements of the British Government, and to prove that it was definitely tied up, Fabre-Luce quotes from three documents. The first is a letter, of the 6th of June 1912, from M. Isvolsky to M. Sazonoff:

"M. Poincaré tells Isvolsky there is no need to worry about changing the Entente into an Alliance; recent events prove that the common interests of England and France are so many and

[1] Later Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson.

so important that in the event of anything like serious complications their united political action is a certainty."

At that point Fabre-Luce puts a full stop to his quotation, but Isvolsky's letter goes on :

" The signing of such and such a formal document, even if it could be supposed to be compatible with the French or English constitution, would not include a guarantee. For even if an Agreement existed Asquith's recent declaration in Parliament, that his Government at the decisive moment would only take the decision dictated by the nation, must remain in force."

This phrase therefore throws down completely what Fabre-Luce sought to set up, and in order to prop up his theory this rather fantastic scribe is obliged to truncate his quotation. The other two documents to which he alludes are Sazonoff's report on my visit to St. Petersburg in August 1912, and his report on his own visit to Balmoral the following month. Sazonoff begins with a phrase which Fabre-Luce leaves out :

" The French Prime Minister told me that, although there is no written treaty between France and England, the General Staffs of both services were in close touch and kept one another continuously informed on any point of interest."

I had, as a matter of fact, given this information to Sazonoff ; I had told him distinctly that so far as the navy was concerned conferences only began in 1912 under the ægis of Mr. Churchill and Delcassé, and that as regards the army a landing of something over a hundred thousand men was contemplated. If the translation of the Black Book is correct Sazonoff must have believed that I read into these provisional military arrangements a distinct promise of co-operation from the British Government.

Such never was, such never could have been, my considered thought. Had I been sure of this why should I have striven to make good a guarantee for France in the letters interchanged in the month of November, which, while accentuating our Entente, did nothing to seal any engagement with England ? What was even more curious : if one is

to believe the Black Book, Sazonoff must have written with regard to his talks at Balmoral:

" Grey confirms of his own accord what I already knew from Poincaré, that there exists an arrangement between France and England in virtue of which England—in the event of war with Germany—has promised to help France, not only with her ships but with the landing of an expeditionary force."

Sir Edward Grey certainly never spoke of any obligation, because no obligation existed, because he had always refused to enter into one, and because he had constantly said in Parliament that he had not assumed, and never would assume, responsibility for doing so. Now, either the Black Book has incorrectly translated Sazonoff words, or Sazonoff misunderstood what was said to him. Never for a moment did England definitely link up herself with France, and, as I told Isvolsky, I never thought it possible to ask so much of her. The Conservative Government may possibly have had an Alliance in its mind just before it went out of office in 1905; the incoming Liberal Party would have nothing to do with it.

But, as time passed, relations between the two peoples grew closer. The Entente of 1904, the only one signed and sealed diplomatically, although restricted in its terms to Morocco, Newfoundland and Egypt, automatically extinguished any lingering spark of ill-feeling, and made easy any exchange of views on matters which had to be decided by the two Cabinets. I often look back to that period when things were comparatively easy, when there were fewer and less complex problems to deal with, when day by day the policy of Paris could be adjusted with the policy of London, when there were fewer dark clouds on the whole horizon.

England, of course, wished to remain friendly to Germany, but she was fully alive to the fiery Imperialism which threatened the peace of the world, which had tampered with the balance of power in Europe, and which openly aspired to the dominion of the sea; should a trial of strength be forced on us, England, we knew, would not stand aloof,

but would lend her puissance to the weaker side which was in arms to defend the rights of Europe.

The British Sovereign, no less than the British Government, lost no opportunity of showing sympathy and goodwill. In the month of March the Marquis de Breteuil, an intimate friend of King Edward VII., was asked to come to London, and at Buckingham Palace King George Vth spoke thus: "I have always been conscious of my imperfect knowledge of France, and of my inability to speak French with real ease and without accent. Perhaps this was because, as a child, there seemed little chance of my coming to the throne. I am very anxious that my eldest son should not suffer from the same disability. Will you let him come and stay with you for four or five months, so that he may thoroughly acquaint himself both with your country and your language?" The proposal was, needless to say, eagerly accepted, and the visit arranged for the same spring.

The stay of the Heir-Apparent in Paris was to have no official significance, and after an exchange of visits with the President and the Prime Minister, he was, as Lord Chester, to join in the family life of the Hôtel Breteuil.

The Prince spent his 18th birthday in Paris, and, as this marked his official coming of age, the President, on my nomination, bestowed on him the Grand Cordon of the Légion d'Honneur; the decoration was received with all the modesty, and not indeed without some of the blushes wont to be shown by a young girl who accepts a jewel after obtaining the consent of her mother. The Prince of Wales's ultra-youthful appearance and shyness of demeanour might have caused the casual observer to form of him a different opinion from those who, like myself, met him frequently and recognised a thoughtful character, an eagerness to learn, an interest in practical problems, and a real knowledge of industrial possibilities and difficulties. The young Englishman loved sport—if not his father's favourite sport; he had a keen sense of humour, and enjoyed all that was interesting in Paris, but was an ascetic as regards the pleasures of the table, the choicest menus being treated by him with complete

A Monsieur Raymond Poincaré, Président du Conseil des Ministres, de la part d'Édouard Prince de Galles, en souvenir de son séjour à Paris en 1912.

indifference, if not with total neglect. When the Earl of Chester went home in July the Marquis de Breteuil wrote to me :

" The young Prince carries away a strong impression of all that he has seen, and a real sympathy for France and Frenchmen ; he is quite determined to come here again as soon, and as often as possible. Thus we seem to have attained the desired result, and you have greatly helped towards this."

" It is noteworthy that the stay of the Prince of Wales in Paris should coincide with the act of homage the French are to pay to the memory of Queen Victoria and King Edward " ; so ran a note in the famous, though since defunct, *Pall Mall Gazette*, and it was indeed happy that just now should occur the ceremonies of unveiling the statues of Queen Victoria at Nice and King Edward VII. at Cannes ; here, indeed, were occasions to show the warmth, and something of the depth, of our feelings. The fêtes, which took place on the 12th and 13th of April, began with a grand Naval and Military Review on the Promenade des Anglais of Nice. The official stand, where I was accompanied by the British Ambassador and the Ministers for War and Marine and other high officials, was placed just in front of the monument to Gambetta ; on one side of it was the box occupied by the King of Sweden, the Prince of Monaco, and other royal personages resident at Cannes ; it was faced by a box similarly decorated, in which sat the Maharajah of Kapurthala and his suite. Streets, quays, avenues were thronged by cheering crowds. The defile was opened by the British Marines, who had disembarked that morning to take their part in the parade, and whose slow march was greatly admired. Behind them came the Bluejackets, dragging their guns, and as each group passed, shouts of " Vive l'Angleterre " were raised, and a no less rapturous greeting awaited our Alpine Chasseurs, Infantry and Hussars, while the aeroplanes, still somewhat mystery-birds, were received with frenzied cheers.

The spectacle was superb ; the sea was as blue as the sky, and on the edge of the horizon rose sharply the profiles of our finest ships. At a given signal all the vessels were set in movement crossways to the troops on shore, and having

fired their salvos opposite the Tribune of Honour, the cortège floated slowly on and out of sight.

After the morning parade I paid a visit to the King of Sweden, who spoke to me of his love of France in general, and of Nice in particular, and who impressed me with his strong desire to be on the friendliest footing with us. Then in the afternoon at Cimiez, the people assembled around Louis Maubert's fine statue of Queen Victoria were no less enthusiastic than in the morning. The "Marseillaise" and "God Save the King" produced almost interminable "Vivas", and when the British Ambassador, clad in full uniform, rose to speak, the excitement bordered on delirium.

Sir Francis Bertie, in a few graceful phrases, said that King George saw, in the desire of the Prime Minister to take part in the ceremony, a fresh earnest of the respect which had always been shown by the French Government and people towards Queen Victoria, and for this His Majesty was deeply grateful. It also gave the King the greatest pleasure that the French and English sailors should have appeared together, both at the Review and the subsequent ceremony, and His Majesty believed that this joint parade was a new proof of the very real and very beneficial friendship which existed between France and England.

In my eulogy of Queen Victoria I sought to dwell on her own wonderful work and worth, and the glory of her reign, and to reserve any reference to politics for when I was to pay my tribute the next day to her illustrious son. I sketched the Queen's life from the early hour when, as a trembling child, she received the homage of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chamberlain, who came to announce her accession, through the happy married life and the long sorrowful widowhood, to the peaceful close in her quiet island home. "The statue itself", I said, "shows the venerable Queen in all gentle dignity, turning her face towards the group of young girls who symbolise the towns where it was her pleasure to take some of her brief holidays from affairs of State, and whose gratitude and respect she never failed to earn. Nice offers her floral sheaf; Cannes, with her armful of flowers, is hand-in-hand with Mentone,

who presents her famous fruit; while Grasse, bending the knee, draws some of the buds from her bouquet to decorate the Royal coat-of-arms." I dealt with Queen Victoria's devotion to duty, of the experience and wisdom which was always at the disposal of her Ministers, of her authority exercised within her constitutional rights, of the intense happiness which marked the first quarter of a century of her reign, and of the great sorrow which cast a perpetual shadow[1] over its latter decades; I alluded to the pleasure she had avowedly derived from her interchange of visits with the Sovereigns of France, and I laid special stress on those womanly and domestic virtues which won for her the esteem of the world, no less than the love of her own people.

Sir Francis Bertie, who held the great Queen in deepest veneration, thanked me with much evident emotion for my speech, and that evening, after a dinner given by the Préfet des Alpes Maritimes, in reply to my toast of King George and the Royal Family, he said: "I am indeed proud to have

[1] "Vous savez, quel douloureux conflit cette mort provoqua, dans l'âme de la reine, entre ses sentiments personnels et ses obligations publiques. La royauté fut si lourde à son veuvage qu'elle essaya de se dérober au monde et qu'elle demeura cinq ans sans ouvrir elle-même les sessions du Parlement. Mais ceux qui gouvernent les hommes n'ont pas même droit à la souffrance: la reine reprit lentement le chemin des cérémonies traditionnelles. Jamais, du reste, elle ne s'était soustraite aux charges essentielles du pouvoir. Elle avait une conception très élevée de sa mission royale et, convaincue que le souverain représentait, sous une forme individuelle, la conscience collective du peuple anglais, elle était fort attachée aux prérogatives de la Couronne. Reine constitutionnelle, elle se fût gardée d'empiéter sur l'autorité et sur l'indépendance des ministres responsables; mais elle surveillait de haut les grands intérêts du pays; elle étudiait elle-même, avec une attention vigilante, toutes les affaires d'ordre général et, surtout dans les questions de politique étrangère, elle mettait au service de la diplomatie britannique le prestige grandissant que la parenté et l'alliance lui avaient assuré sur nombre de familles régnantes. On a pu mesurer le légitime ascendant qu'elle avait conquis sur les nations et sur les Gouvernements, lorsqu'ont été célébrés, en 1887 et en 1897, les cinquantième et soixantième anniversaires de son avènement. Nulle solennité officielle ne ressembla davantage à une apothéose. Fils, gendres et petits-fils de la reine formaient une longue cavalcade princière; des rois s'avançaient en procession; des rajahs, revêtus de costumes éclatants, étaient venus apporter leurs hommages à celle qui, depuis 1877, avait ajouté à son titre héréditaire le nom triomphal et nouveau d'Impératrice des Indes; des Canadiens, des Australiens, des Africains du Sud, des blancs, des nègres et des jaunes étaient accourus pour rendre à la métropole le tribut universel du loyalisme colonial. . . ."

been commanded by the King to represent him at the beautiful fêtes organised in memory of Queen Victoria and King Edward. I would tender my heartfelt thanks for the wonderful speech which you have made this morning, and which will be deeply appreciated by my Sovereign and his Royal House. The King was particularly glad to be able to send a squadron of his fleet into French waters, in order that British sailors might take part with their French comrades in the march-past of this morning and the ceremony this afternoon. I shall not fail to inform His Majesty of the generous greeting which was accorded to the sailors and marines by the people of Nice, nor to tell him of the kindly words which you yourself have spoken about them."

The next day the two squadrons had their rendezvous at Golfe Juan. The sky remained cloudless, but a boisterous easterly wind was blowing, and although the roads were sheltered by the Garoupe the sea was uncomfortably rough for our visit to the *Good Hope*, on which the Admiral, Sir D. Gamble, had hoisted his flag. We were drenched with spray, and the climbing on board the ship from the little motor boats was so awkward that some of my colleagues declined the effort, to the evident amusement of the Admiral and perhaps also of the Marines band massed on deck to greet us with the "Marseillaise".

An hour later we were at Cannes, and drawn up in front of the statue—one of Denys Peuch's happiest works, in which King Edward is represented just as Cannes knew him, a stalwart, dignified, smiling and perfectly "turned out" yachtsman.

"Thanks to his frequent visits to France, King Edward was able to take account for himself of the feelings of the French people, and of the opportunity of establishing a real and settled friendship between the two countries. The heart's desire of the King has been fulfilled, and the presence of the Prime Minister, and the association of English and French troops at the unveiling of the statue and at yesterday's ceremony are the happiest proof of it."

To the accompaniment of such words from the lips of the

British Ambassador the British cruisers *Good Hope, Southwark,* and *Lancaster* came forward on the waves which the strong easterly wind turned into the appearance of hillocks, a long line of yachts with multi-coloured flags placed themselves in the forefront, dancing about to the possible discomfort of their owners, and between these two lines the French fleet was ordered to pass.

It was then my turn, and I began by tracing a portrait, so far as I could, of the Prince of Wales, whom I personally had only known as King Edward and with whom I had talked for some time when he was in Paris 1906. " We can all of us remember his easy dignity, his shrewd common sense, his kindness of heart, his constant good humour, his inborn diplomacy, his supreme capacity for adapting himself to people and places ; qualities which inspired his every action. Without any effort he was always sure of himself and sure of his circumstances ; a keen sportsman, he was none the less interested in art and science and letters. Nothing was too large, no detail was too small for him.

" For half a century he served his apprenticeship as Heir-Apparent of the throne, and the experience was a school of inestimable value."

In alluding to King Edward's travels I could say as regards ourselves that every time he came to France he went more and more closely into our ways and means; he got closer touch with our statesmen, our men of letters, our artists, and he brought to bear on one and all that ineffable charm in which no man, not even excepting Gambetta, surpassed him.

" When at the age of sixty he came to his throne, all his accumulated stores of tact and prudence and foresight and knowledge of the world were brought into light. His knowledge of men was even greater than his knowledge of matter, and he was determined to harness everything he knew to the service of a loyal policy which should make for peace and order."

I could not resist dilating on how, and how admirably, King Edward pursued his policy, but knowing that the British Cabinet was anxious he should be reviewed as a

wholly constitutional monarch, I emphasised the fact that his visits to foreign countries and his relations with foreign courts—both of inestimable value—were always in accord with his own Foreign Office. As to the King's part in the Entente I did him no more than justice in reminding my audience that, "nearly nine years have elapsed since the memorable visit which set a term to misunderstandings and which brought together two peoples surely made to respect and really to understand one another. Edward VII. saw at a glance what could, and ought, to be done; it occurred to him as entirely possible and eminently desirable that, without breaking in on any existing combinations and without setting up any stumbling-block or cause of offence, England and France, the two nations who stand first alike in their noble history and their vast resources, should unite in a common aim for peace and prosperity.[1] At the

[1] "En grand réaliste qu'il était, il se dit, en même temps, que pour consacrer cet accord, il n'était peut-être pas indispensable d'en faire l'objet d'un contrat solennel, couché sur parchemin, et que, pour garantir la solidité et la durée de l'entente, il suffirait d'accoutumer les deux peuples à se connaître et à s'apprécier, de créer entre eux des raisons permanentes de sympathie mutuelle et d'établir entre les deux gouvernements des relations de franchise cordiale et de scrupuleuse loyauté. Lorsqu'après s'être ainsi rapprochée de la France, l'Angleterre, quelques années plus tard, tendit la main à la Russie, l'équilibre des forces européennes se trouva ainsi moins instable et la paix elle-même moins précaire. Édouard VII était, en effet, pacifique par tempérament et par goût, aussi bien que par raisonnement, et, s'il se plaisait à appeler la France la meilleure amie de l'Angleterre, il ne donnait certes pas à cette amitié une signification dont d'autres nations pussent légitimement s'inquiéter. Ce n'est pas dans un esprit différent que la France a elle-même pratiqué cette politique d'entente et que, depuis la mort d'Édouard VII, elle y a fidèlement persévéré. Si le bienfait de la paix est précieux à tous les peuples, il est particulièrement nécessaire à une démocratie républicaine, qui cherche patiemment dans le travail, dans l'ordre et dans l'activité productrice, plus de bien être, de prospérité et de justice sociale. La France, attentive à sa tâche intérieure, ne songe à attaquer ni à provoquer personne autour d'elle; mais elle a clairement conscience que pour n'être elle-même ni attaquée, ni provoquée, elle a besoin d'entretenir, sur terre et sur mer, des forces capables de faire respecter son honneur et de défendre ses intèrêts. C'est sur ses propres ressources en hommes et en argent, c'est sur sa propre puissance navale et militaire, qu'elle doit, d'abord, compter pour la sauvegarde de ses droits et de sa dignité. Mais l'autorité qu'elle puise en elle-même se fortifie grandement du concours que lui prêtent, tous les jours, dans l'action diplomatique, ses amis et ses alliés; et nous ne saurions oublier qu'Édouard VII, le premier, a favorisé, inauguré et poursuivi cette collaboration amicale entre la France et le Royaume Uni."

beginning of his all too short reign this great King told his Privy Council that while there was a breath in his body he would work for the good of his people. In labouring for the good of his people, he laboured equally for the peace and civilisation of the world and for the cause of humanity, and when with his last breath he sighed that he had only endeavoured 'to do his duty' he was unduly self-effacing, for in truth he had succeeded to the full in what he had sought to accomplish."

After the unveiling of the statue we were bidden to tea by Countess Torby, the wife of the Grand Duke Michael, the chairman of the King Edward Memorial Committee. A few minutes only could be spent at the Villa Kazbeck, whence we had to speed to Monaco, where Prince Albert gave us a banquet: the next morning we were on our way back to Paris.

The whole occasion made an excellent effect in England, and the *Daily Mail* alluded to the presence of the Prime Minister and Ministers for War and Marine as being of first-rate importance. "The Riviera Fêtes solemnly and ceremonially reaffirmed the continuity of the Entente." M. Paul Cambon enclosed in his own letter of warmest congratulation a charming note he had received from the Princess Helena, Queen Victoria's third daughter. "The Princess", he explained to me, "is fond of her nephew the Emperor. She thinks him very attractive and highly gifted, but is more than anxious about his indiscretion; nor can she forgive him his harsh conduct to his mother, the Empress Frederick, while she execrates Bismarck." "You who have known my mother", so wrote the Princess to the Ambassador, "can understand what pride all who loved a Queen and a mother take in M. Poincaré's wonderful speech. If opportunity should occur, could you tell him how his words, so true and so touching, have appealed to me, and how grateful I feel for them." A few days later M. Cambon wrote again: "Lord Morley, representing all the ideas of Mr. Gladstone, who knew the innermost recesses of British politics, is greatly interested in your finding a likeness between the characters of King Edward

and Gambetta. This likeness had occurred to him but to no one else except yourself."

Through the British Ambassador the King asked for a copy of my speech in the original French, and Sir Francis at the same time forwarded to me a letter of congratulation from his Sovereign as to the success of his own mission to the Riviera, with a gracious word of thanks for myself.

"York Cottage,
14*th April* 1912.

"Now that the fêtes which the towns of Nice and Cannes organised in memory of Queen Victoria and King Edward are over, the King desires to lose no time in expressing to you his sincere gratitude for the manner in which you have carried out his wishes as H.M.'s representative, and have assisted to secure such happy results.

"The reports of the proceedings have been followed with the closest attention by His Majesty, who is very much pleased that everything has passed off without a hitch.

"The King asks that you will take the earliest opportunity of assuring M. Poincaré how deeply touched His Majesty is by the beautiful and moving words used by him at Nice and Cannes in his allusions and references to the Reigns of His Majesty's dear grandmother and father.

"The King feels that the presence of M. Poincaré and his two distinguished colleagues invested those ceremonies with a special dignity and significance, and that the sympathetic spirit shown by the French people throughout the stirring events of the last few days cannot fail to consolidate the foundations of friendship which so happily exist between the two countries.

"The King wishes you to thank M. Poincaré for the great compliment paid to the English Fleet in inviting a Detachment to take part in these celebrations alongside the French Navy and Army, and for the cordial welcome extended to his Sailors.

"I am further to add that His Majesty has heard with much gratification from his son of his interview with M. Poincaré, and is especially grateful to the Prime Minister for giving the Prince of Wales such facilities for seeing the places of interest in Paris and for taking such an interest in his education.

"If possible, His Majesty would like a copy in French of M. Poincaré's review of the Reigns of Queen Victoria and King Edward.

"His Majesty was very glad to be able to accede to your

request, and to confer the G.C.V.O. on M. Joly, the Prefect of the Alpes Maritimes. —Yours very truly,

"CLIVE WIGRAM."

Of course neither in fêtes nor compliments are to be found the vital forces of international agreements, but, if only as a symbol, they are not without value in their influence on popular opinion and temper.

CHAPTER VIII

Entente Cordiale and the Dominions—Franco-English naval arrangements—Supplementary accords of November—Belgian neutrality—Loyalty of Belgium—Visit of King Albert and Queen Elizabeth.

One of the reasons which the British Government constantly adduced to prohibit their entering into any contract was the autonomy of their Colonies, and it behoved us to show to Greater Britain no less than to its Metropolis how liberal and pacific was our main policy. I hailed with special pleasure a visit to Paris in 1912 of the Canadian Prime Minister with several of his colleagues, and I easily persuaded my friend Gabriel Hanotaux and M. Rey, the Agent-General for Canada, to arrange a reception in their honour. This was held on a beautiful July evening in a restaurant in the Bois de Boulogne, when I was able to extend to the British Dominions overseas the same tribute which France had offered to the Mother Country. Neither France nor Canada, I could truthfully say, need now fear any event, or any policy or any danger which might disturb their deeply rooted friendship. "The closest ties of friendship between England, her Great Colony and France, is an object dear to us as to yourselves, and I earnestly hope that your presence in Paris will go far to realise what we all sincerely desire."

Scarcely less opportune was a banquet—where I took the chair—given to the Anglo-American Press, who could be healthily reminded how potent they were to promote and preserve good feeling between France and the two great English-speaking countries. "You live in Paris and so you must love it," I urged upon our guests. "You know France by heart and you know therefore that France only wishes to be strong in order to make the larger contribution

to peace and civilisation. Tell this to your compatriots not once only, but again and again." I had said much the same thing to the out-going American Ambassador at the farewell party to him at the Luxembourg. America was then politically much more remote than to-day; we had few interests in common, except for certain matters arising out of the Morocco protectorate and the Italo-Turkish war, and I had little of moment to discuss either with Mr. Robert Bacon—who, by the way, spoke French with unusual fluency —or with his successor Mr. Myron T. Herrick, both of whom did all that they could to make any conversation as easy and as pleasant as possible.

With the ever-affable Sir Francis Bertie, however, I was in constant communication, and the more so because the German Emperor, who had been pulled up short in his attempt to intimidate England, was now said to be trying other tactics.

According to Jules Cambon, who knew him well, his game was to weaken, if not to destroy, the Entente; in some corner of his heart he cherished a sort of regard for England, perhaps involuntarily inherited from his mother, but this by no means precluded his outputs of spite and envy.

The Kaiser was apparently not too well pleased with the way in which Count Metternich had carried out the instructions given to him directly after Lord Haldane's visit to Berlin. Meanwhile, he had been spending a few days in his island home at Corfu, which he described to the Czar as his "paradise on earth". At Achillion he felt himself not only, as he told "Nicky," Admiral of the Atlantic, but also Emperor of the Mediterranean, and on this occasion Achillion had been specially agreeable, for he had been in the company of one of his favourites, Herr Vangenheim, German Minister in Greece, who just then coveted Freiherr von Bieberstein's post at Constantinople. Since the downfall of Abdul Hamid, and even more since the Italian-Turkish war, Bieberstein had evinced a strong desire to quit Constantinople, where his prestige had become a good deal dimmed, and for the last two years he had confided to his colleague, our M. Maurice Bompard, that his great wish was to be sent to London,

where he thought he could sweeten Anglo-German feelings. Bieberstein roundly blamed Prince Bülow for having compromised the former friendly relations of the two countries, and he was sure that no one could repair the harm so well as himself. The Kaiser astutely thought that he could please Bieberstein and Vangenheim with the same stroke, and incidentally grease the diplomatic wheels in London and Constantinople. But this double shuffle had its serious side, and while Sir Edward Goschen did not conceal from Jules Cambon his anxiety, Sir Arthur Nicolson warned Cambon that the mission to London of an ambassador as energetic as Bieberstein signified that the German Government would once more try to cancel easy relations between France and England. Sir Edward Grey, who as Foreign Under-Secretary twenty years earlier had had dealings with Bieberstein, remembered him as a very capable diplomat but as the very reverse of an Anglophile. Cambon, who also knew Bieberstein pretty well, told the Permanent Under-Secretary that the German diplomatist had too much common-sense to embark on any fresh discussions as to naval expenditure, and that he would rather set afoot some comparatively colourless agreement about the Colonies ; at the same time, there would very likely be an attempt to interweave German and English finance, which might prove highly troublesome to France.

In a chat with Sir Francis Bertie, I had let it be known what we thought of Bieberstein's nomination to London. Sir Francis reported this to Sir Edward Grey, who hastened to assure me that King George's Government would do nothing to impair the friendship which His Majesty earnestly desired to maintain with us, and that only questions respecting territory south of the Equator were at issue between himself and the German Ambassador. As it turned out, Bieberstein had neither time nor opportunity for any political or financial intrigues in England, as he died in September, without leaving any trace of these activities.

The African questions to which the Foreign Secretary alluded dated back for some years, and were not settled before 1914. At this time it was a question of reviving an Anglo-German treaty respecting the Portuguese Colony in

South Africa which had been drawn up in 1898, when Portugal, under a financial crisis, thought to make sure of British support, and when Lord Salisbury's Government was already polemically engaged with the Government of the Transvaal.

While M. de Soveral, the highly popular Portuguese emissary in London, was treating with Lord Salisbury as to strengthening his country's alliance with Great Britain in return for certain advantages to be enjoyed in the Portuguese Colonies, some German financiers came to London to take stock with English business men of Portugal's liabilities, and they let it be known the German Government would be by no means unwilling to enter into some bargain as to the Portuguese colony. Relations just then were a little strained between Paris and London ; the Cabinet snatched at the chance of reviving the cordial relations which had been clouded by the Kaiser's famous telegram to President Kruger, and no one was better pleased than Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Minister, to do something which would facilitate British military operations against the Boers. During the Parliamentary recess of 1898, Mr. Balfour, who was deputising for Lord Salisbury, drew up a Convention with Count Hatzfeld, the German Ambassador, which admitted of a division of the Portuguese colonies between England and Germany. It was specified that this distribution should only take place in the event of territory being willingly ceded by Portugal, who was no party to the agreement, and was content with the assurance that nothing could be done without her consent. The agreement was not smiled upon by Lord Salisbury, who did nothing to make it operative, while his successors allowed it to slumber altogether. But Germany had no notion of giving up the dainty morsels which she had been sniffing so agreeably, and on the 18th February 1912, Jules Cambon told me that there was a good deal of talk in Berlin as to the 1898 Treaty, and that German opinion already envisaged Angola as Imperial property. Portugal had uneasily complained to her great ally, who had authorised the Prime Minister of the young republic to say in Parliament, on the 15th March, that the time-honoured engagements of Great Britain remained un-

impaired, and that no sort of convention existed between Germany and England which could in any sort of way threaten the independence, the integrity or the interests of Portugal. As for France, she had no precise knowledge of what was in the 1898 Treaty, and only in January 1914 did Paul Cambon learn from Sir Edward Grey that Cabinda and Loanda, as well as the larger part of Angola, were assigned to Germany, and that Great Britain only took over the strip of land required for the Lolito Bay railway. Such was the price which the British Cabinet had to pay to Germany, in the year of Fashoda, for freedom of action in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. In 1912, Germany would have been glad to add to what she had gained—to our loss—in the basin of the Congo, and to realise the hopes she had raised on the 1898 agreement. England, however, thank God! was not in her mood of fourteen years earlier, and nothing that she did could give rise, either in France or Portugal, to the slightest feeling of anxiety or resentment. Germany's insidious ways sufficed to keep England and ourselves on the *qui vive*, and to be sure that no moment could be less opportune to let go of one another.

At the beginning of 1912 the British Admiralty and our Minister of Marine had no sort of understanding equivalent to what existed between the military General Staffs ; there had only been occasional exchanges of views, and these at long intervals. At the end of May the Prime Minister and the First Lord repaired to Malta to confer with Lord Kitchener, then British Agent-General in Egypt, and to examine on the spot the conditions of the fleet in the Mediterranean, and they took the opportunity to put in at Bizerta.

It was just now that the *Observer* was suggesting that in face of German plans, England was on one horn of a dilemma ; she must either build a fleet to cope with the Triple Powers in the Mediterranean, or form an alliance with France. Military support given to France would be balanced by French backing in the Mediterranean. The *Morning Post* and the *Spectator* played on the same note, while the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily Chronicle* vigorously repudiated the bare idea of an alliance. Mr. Edmund Morel,

who was about as hostile to Sir Edward Grey as he was to France, was so pro-German in his sympathy as to suggest the rupture, even of the Entente Cordiale; he had just published a book in which he represented France as a decadent country, and therefore as a dangerous ally—too weak to attack Germany, but just able to invade Spain or Belgium. As a set-off to these noisy polemics, Mr. Churchill forwarded to our Naval and Military Attaché an advance plan of concerted defence, but—doubtless to forestall the possible objections of several of his colleagues—the First Lord drafted a preamble which, in the opinion of our General Staff, threatened to destroy the practical value of the Entente. It did not so much matter if Article 1 recited that the arrangement must not affect the political liberty of the contractants; what did matter was that Article 2 added that naval dispositions would be made by each of the two Governments with entire independence and wholly in conformity with their country's interests—surely a very inadequate method of concerting two naval engagements. As Paul Cambon himself said a little later, "with a declaration like this, one might well ask whether the Entente was worth while".

The British Government was indeed between two fires, one side protesting that they were doing too much, and the other asserting that they were hanging back. At the end of July the Conservative leader in the Upper House, Lord Selborne, had asked about the reported recall of the British fleet from the Mediterranean, and had been told by Lord Crewe that the matter was not settled. On the 22nd July Mr. Churchill said in the Commons: "Together with the French Fleet, our Mediterranean Fleet would constitute a force superior to any naval combination." He thus openly announced a naval understanding. Three days later the Prime Minister declared: "We have cultivated with great and growing cordiality on both sides our special international friendships. They have stood the test of time, the test of bad as well as of good weather. . . . I say deliberately that our friendships are in no sense exclusive friendships."[1]

[1] At this sitting Mr. Bonar Law stated that the measures taken by the Admiralty were insufficient.

There had therefore been something of a wavering in London, and no doubt this was why Mr. Churchill had not been able to give us any cut-and-dried plans. His proposals were under consideration, and the French Government had decided nothing, when, early in September 1912—owing to an Admiralty error, when M. Delcassé was away in his constituency—the Commander of the Third Squadron received an order from the General Staff to fit out for the Mediterranean. This news, which got wind at Brest, appeared in the newspapers, and made a considerable stir, the English Press regarding it as a sign of a definite naval agreement. The premature announcement was highly inconvenient for us. In letting it be thought that we had shifted our Atlantic squadrons from Brest to Toulon, we ran the risk of depriving ourselves of our means of striking a bargain with England. A concentration of our ships in the Mediterranean was, in fact, as Paul Cambon wrote to me, the precise service which England expected in the event of a mutual understanding. It was just what we should offer in return for what we should ask, and to go to the Mediterranean without being asked was to lose the very goods with which we had to trade with England. Moreover, to evacuate the Atlantic and the Channel, without being sure that the British would replace us there, was to jeopardise the safety of our coast and to impair the defence of our ports. I at once let Delcassé know that as things stood the contemplated move could not be made.

The Italian Government had been a little worried by the report which had got about, and I had to instruct our Chargé d'Affaires to say that no definite step had been taken; at the same time, Cambon told Sir Arthur Nicolson that we could not denude our coast on the north and west without a substantial guarantee from England. Our Ambassador had already notified Sir Edward Grey that Mr. Churchill's opening articles rendered any Entente almost nugatory: "How could we", he asked, "expose our Channel and Atlantic coasts to the insults of a German fleet without knowing how far we could rely on England?" To the Foreign Minister's plea that no sort of military

engagement could be entered into without the consent of Parliament, Cambon replied: "It is no question of an engagement *here and now*; we only want some assurance as to the defence of our coast. Could we not revert to Lord Lansdowne's proposal, and agree that in the event of a threatening situation we would put our heads together, and decide how best mutually to protect ourselves from the dangers of war? In a word, if in presence of such danger we should consider an alliance or a military convention our best way out, we should resort to this. If our opinions differed, and then either of us refused to go to war, each party would take its own precautions; France could not police the Mediterranean without agreement in other respects."

I had entirely approved of what Cambon said, and I only slightly altered a draft proposal he submitted to the Foreign Secretary. Sir Edward, of course, referred this to the Prime Minister, who objected that he could sign nothing without the consent of Parliament. Cambon pressed Sir Edward, Sir Edward pressed Mr. Asquith, who a few days afterwards agreed to an exchange of letters on condition that these should not rank as diplomatic documents, but as a personal correspondence between a Secretary of State and an Ambassador; he also stipulated that the wording should be approved by the Cabinet which met on the 30th October. The wording was easily agreed on, and on the 22nd and 23rd November letters were exchanged, which are now familiar, and which were read out by M. Viviani in the Chambre the day after England declared war. The letters contained no rock promise of co-operation in the event of an outbreak of war.

Enclosure 1 *in No.* 105

SIR EDWARD GREY to M. CAMBON, French Ambassador in London

FOREIGN OFFICE, *November* 22, 1912.

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR,

From time to time in recent years the French and British naval and military experts have consulted together. It has

always been understood that such consultation does not restrict the freedom of either Government to decide at any future time whether or not to assist the other by armed force. We have agreed that consultation between experts is not, and ought not to be regarded as, an engagement that commits either Government to action in a contingency that has not arisen and may never arise. The disposition, for instance, of the French and British fleets respectively at the present moment is not based upon an engagement to co-operate in war.

You have, however, pointed out that, if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, it might become essential to know whether it could in that event depend upon the armed assistance of the other.

How did these letters modify in any way this state of things? Just so far:

"I agree that, if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, or something that threatened the general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other whether both Governments should act together to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and, if so, what measures they would be prepared to take in common. If these measures involved action, the plans of the General Staffs would at once be taken into consideration, and the Governments would then decide what effect should be given to them.—Yours, etc.,

"E. GREY."

Thus the only engagement undertaken was to make a joint study of the situation and, as Cambon reminded me, the fall of Delcassé in 1905 cost perhaps rather dear, for Lord Lansdowne just then would have looked upon letters of this kind as the beginning of an alliance, while Mr. Asquith considered them as the last words of an agreement. All that we now could secure was a promise that we should confer together in face of danger, and a hypothetical acceptance of plans drawn up by our General Staffs. When, therefore, the ex-Kaiser writes of "agreements relating to reciprocal help from English and French armies", he is altogether beside the facts. There was no alliance, there was no definite promise of help, and the lack of these was only too sadly felt by France in the dark hours which preceded the struggle.

A few days before the war, Paul Cambon, at the request of Viviani, reminded Sir Edward Grey of the letters of November 1912,[1] and the Foreign Minister replied that the moment had indeed come to face all the conditions and discuss them across a table : he added that above all the subject must come before the Cabinet. The decision of the Cabinet was to the effect that the British Government could not guarantee to France any intervention, that they would set themselves at once to secure from Germany, as from France, a promise to respect Belgian neutrality, but that the situation must develop further before any actual armed assistance could be considered. Thus, when war hung in the balance, the Government of the King could quite rightly claim freedom and for the moment refuse to come to our side.

But however imperfect the Entente, we were very glad to have it stiffened, and the exchange of letters had a twofold advantage. The difficulty with regard to the distribution of the two fleets was brushed away, and we were able for the future—and more especially in the imminent crisis in the Near East—to keep constant touch with the Cabinet in London and blend our labours for peace. There was yet a stronger reason for unity of purpose, as we had the same fear that sooner or later, if Germany were to attack France, she would also violate the neutrality of Belgium. This supposition had been supported by much that the " intelligence " of both countries had for some time been able to glean, and had to be closely considered in any joint plan of defence.

Lord Haldane has said that the British General Staff in 1906 thought that one day German troops would cross Belgium and camp on the coast ; our experts feared that they would turn the forts of the Este and penetrate into France over a less defended frontier. Neither of us surmised that they would make—as they did make in 1914—a huge deployment to bring them out beyond Maubeuge. But we were equally guarantors of Belgian neutrality, and it was

[1] " M. Cambon reminded me to-day of the letter I had written to him two years ago." (Grey to Bertie, 30th July 1914.)

equally our duty to consider how that neutrality should be maintained, and in respect of this, our error, if any, lay not in excess, but in insufficiency of concerted operation.

According to a memorandum which General Joffre—in the presence of Millerand, Admiral Aubert and Paléologue —showed me on the 21st February 1912, the B.E.F. would consist of six Infantry Divisions, one Cavalry Division, and two Brigades of M.I., making up a total of nearly 125,000 combatants as compared with the 80,000 originally suggested in 1906. These troops embarking from English and Scottish ports were to land at Boulogne, Havre and Rouen, where they would remain for twenty-four hours in rest camps and then be taken by railway up to the left of our troops in the Hirson-Maubeuge district, opposite the Belgian frontier. This concentration would be completed on the evening of the fourteenth day of our mobilisation, and it was thus hoped that our Allies would take the field on the fifteenth day, in time to give us effective support.

General Joffre was convinced that the initiative would be taken with a German concentration round Aix-la-Chapelle, and he was much perturbed at the idea of our remaining with our arms folded in front of the Belgian frontier until the neutral ground was invaded by the enemy; this course presented to his soldier's mind grave objections. But moral and diplomatic reasons outweighed purely military considerations, and in 1914 neither England nor France moved a step forward till a violated Belgium made her appeal. However great the danger of delay, the plan of defence was in no whit altered.

Here again, in his *Tableaux d'histoire*, Wilhelm outrages truth. He distorts the famous Belgian documents which the Germans seized at Brussels and says :

"1906. January. Agreement between England and the Belgian Government in the event of a war with Germany."

The ex-Kaiser forgets that in 1915 the Germans themselves were compelled to admit that there had been no Agreement, only a single conversation between the British Military Attaché and the Belgian Chief of Staff when the two

were considering how England could come to Belgium's rescue if the latter's neutrality were disregarded.

" But ", says Wilhelm, " this conversation was resumed in 1912," and he quotes an entry :

" British Military Attaché's statement to Belgian Chief-of-Staff in case of war, England to land troops in Belgium at once, without waiting for Belgium's consent. The Belgian Government did not protest against this statement."

Certainly, according to a note written by an official at the Belgian Foreign Office, Count Van der Straaten, and published during the war by the Germans, Colonel Bridges, on the 23rd April 1912, told General Jungblatt that if hostilities had broken out between France and Germany in 1911, about Morocco and the Congo, England would not have waited for Belgium's cry for help to land a force ; perhaps a rather impetuous military dictum, which, however, the British Government entirely disavowed and the Belgian Government, whatever Wilhelm may say, specifically repudiated. Quite enough evidence as to this can be found in the Belgian Grey Book, or in the work of a German writer, Herr Valentin, who gives the true version of the incident.

The truth was that when Colonel Bridges and General Jungblatt met, Germany had just done what was likely to give something of a shock to Belgium and her guarantors. It had been suddenly announced that a cavalry regiment was to be posted at Malmédy, and early in May, M. Magnette, the Liberal member for Liège, pointed out to Parliament the danger of this and how easily the Germans could be in half-an-hour at Stavelot and in two hours at Liège. We knew also that the German General Staff had been provided with maps of Belgian territory and that a large number of these had been printed off for the use of officers ; in 1914 we found these maps on German prisoners and I have a copy of one myself, given to me by General Bourgeois, chief of our geographical service.

In spite of these premonitions, the French and British Governments refused to accept the theory of a gross viola-

tion of a little kingdom. In 1914 no steps were taken to prevent it, and Belgium herself was so little disposed to play the part of the willing victim of any of the guaranteeing powers, that up to the German ultimatum she would not make any appeal to us. So proud and jealous was she of her independence, and so confident as to the good faith of treaties, that France would have thought it not only indiscreet, but highly unbecoming to speak with her as to immunity from attack.

I remember when the distinguished orator, Comte de Mum, who had near relations and friends in Belgium, spoke to me as to the vulnerability of the eastern frontier of Wallonia, I could only say that we could not consider the subject unless it were broached from Belgium, and he was obliged shortly after to tell us that in high quarters it was thought impossible to allude to anything of the sort. It was perhaps only after the meeting at Potsdam of the German and Belgian monarchs in October 1913, that the danger became acutely obvious, and even then no military entente, in the real sense of the word, existed between France and Belgium.

But the alarm sounded in 1911 had stirred Belgium, and some of our good neighbours had anxiously asked if their independence and neutrality were adequately protected. Long discussions took place in their Parliament that autumn, and the War Minister came in for a good deal of blame as to shortcomings and defects in military organisations. France and England could, of course, do no more in 1912 than let it be quietly known at Brussels how uneasy we were as to the German plan of campaign of which our "Intelligence" could give us some inkling.

This is what M. De Broqueville, the Belgian Prime Minister, explained to Parliament in 1913, in a secret session to discuss Army estimates which were, he said, based on the German estimate of the previous year, which foreshadowed the greatest military expansion Germany had effected since 1870: Germany would have 300,000 more first-line men than France, and the object of this was the passage of a German army through Belgium. "As for

France," the Minister observed, "we must remember that Lille is now out of date, that new forts have been built on the south frontier, and that the French Government has increased the number of cavalry and infantry regiments. I have no fear that France will attempt to violate our independence, but I feel sure the French General Staff has considered the hypothesis of traversing Belgium in case our land should be invaded by Germany. To be immune from any surprise we must be guarded on both sides. . . . Last July the head of a state[1] said to us, 'I would give Belgium the friendly advice to make good her defences, for the miracle, by which in 1870 she remained intact between two opposing armies, will not be repeated'."

Events proved how well founded were the presentiments of our Staff, and what good cause British and French Generals had to put their heads together to counteract a German inroad on Belgium.

It is true that scientific soldiers fully expected that Germany would some day rush Belgium, and General Dubail told the Russians this in 1911. But it is amazing to find Germany saying, in 1914, that our surprise and indignation were all affectation, and that we had always looked for a violation of Belgium. This was as ludicrous as it was offensive. We may not have disguised from ourselves that the advent of a great German force in Belgium was within shrewd surmise, and we may have been gnawed by anxiety, but until the rumours we heard were confirmed by brutal facts, we could cling to the hope that at the last Germany might be stayed in her maleficent course, either by a wholesome fear of England or by a supreme sense of right and wrong.

The agony of war wove very closely the threads between France and Belgium; but before the war we had always been wishful not only to fulfil our obligation as guarantors of our neighbour's independence but to walk together on the paths of peace and commercial integrity. Unfortunately, the preparation of the Treaty of the 4th November had an unexpected counterstroke in Belgium. On the 26th Octo-

[1] The King of Roumania.

ber 1911, Kiderlen had suddenly asked Jules Cambon if France would give up to Germany her pre-emptive rights in the Belgian Congo. These rights had been recognised by France and Belgium just after the annexation of the African territory, and were to be exercised in case of any total or partial surrender (for consideration given) of Congolese land, or in case of any exchange with, or concession to, a foreign Power; the Belgian Government had promised to make no gratuitous gift of land. Nothing in this arrangement of 1908 went to show that preferential right thus given to France could be transferred by her to a third Power, and it was in any case out of the question that Belgium should not be consulted before any such transfer could be considered.

Belgium was at once a little upset by our pourparlers with Germany about the Congo, and queried whether, in giving up territory, we were going to give up—as inherent in it—our pre-emptive rights. The law-officers of the Crown reassured the Belgian Government, but their public and press were not appeased. Nor were these altogether wrong, for on the 26th October, Kiderlen himself brought up the subject. Curiously enough, three months earlier he had said to Jules Cambon: "I read in some of the newspapers that we are thinking of asking you for your pre-emptive right in the Congo; this is not true, and it seems to me only a dodge to provoke people in Brussels and London." Why, then, did the Foreign Secretary, after having spoken thus on the 23rd July, bring up, on the 26th October, a matter which he knew to be delicate? The answer is to be found in the *Documents Verts*. On the 26th July, Baron Schoen had telegraphed to his Foreign Office as to a visit paid by M. Fondère to Baron Lanken:

> "Fondère, who yesterday had a long talk with Caillaux, says that the latter is quite sure it would be impossible for them to give up the whole Congo coast: public opinion would consider this as a climb-down for France, and for him personally it would be political suicide. Caillaux has expressed the opinion that France could, by a secret treaty, give up her preferential rights in the Belgian Congo."

On the 4th August Kiderlen, thinking that he had learnt

from this telegram the view of the French Prime Minister, told Jules Cambon that the exit of Belgium from the Congo was within the purview of France and Germany. Then, after sounding him thus, he returned, with more particularity, to the same subject at the end of October; he had declared that he could not go to the Reichstag with the meagre concessions granted in the Congo, and that in default of a larger stretch of territory, he must at least have the right of pre-emption. This de Selves refused, but Germany had some little satisfaction, in that a rider to the Agreement recited that if the territorial statute respecting the basin of the Congo were at any time modified, the contracting parties could confer among themselves and with the other Powers who had signed the Act of Berlin. The Yellow Book shows clearly how this German pretension disgusted London and Brussels. Belgium was for a long time unhappy about it, and when the Treaty was before the Senate, M. Ribot and myself were at the utmost pains to say everything that would ease her mind.

A happy occasion was to allow us to sponge away all traces of this unfortunate incident. The Belgian Sovereigns in the third week of March paid a visit to France; how little I thought then that it would be in the din and dust of war that I should renew and strengthen the acquaintance then made with them. The first impression left on me by both at a private breakfast given by the President was of gentleness and serenity. The King was simple, and modest almost to apparent timidity, and seemed as much embarrassed by his rank as by his stature; he spoke slowly and in low tones, with a slight Flemish accent, and seemed to be excusing himself for talking, though his language revealed clear thinking as well as an upright and noble character.

The Queen, as charming as she was evidently discreet, was graciousness incarnate. Who would have supposed that frail, delicate woman, formed to adorn a Court or to be the joy of a home, would remain calm and unruffled in the thick of a war which drew a "curtain of fire" between herself and the country of her birth? Who could have foreseen that this illustrious pair would offer to the world, and to posterity, an undying example of heroism and chivalry? After the break-

fast, the King spoke long with me, and alluded to the commotion of the year before in Belgium, and the polemics of our Press regarding the Congo. He thanked me for what I had said in the Senate, and told me that Belgium was now reassured and only wished England to recognise, as we did, the annexation of the Congo. He asked me very tactfully if I could help to bring this about, and I was only too glad to promise that I would convey our advice, and our hopes, to the British Cabinet. Not a word passed as to German provocations, and we soon dismissed politics to discuss music and literature with the Queen.

CHAPTER IX

Policy of France towards Austria-Hungary—Imaginative bargaining at Vienna—Demand for admission to the *Bourse*—Count Aehrenthal succeeded by Berchtold—M. Crozier replaced by M. Dumaine—Paul Deschanel in Austria.

THE Italian-Turkish War grew in duration and dimension; Albania was disturbed, Macedonia was in a ferment, Austria-Hungary watched jealously the actions of her ally, Italy, and was a little nervous as to a counter-stroke there, but so far gave us no reason to complain of our relations with her. Austria was represented in Paris by a Grand Seigneur of fine appearance and of the Old World, a very admirable person, with whom from end to end I got on excellently. The instructions which he had received from his Government were, as a whole, conciliatory. Vienna could not forget France's attitude in 1908-9 in the matter of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which the Emperor had for a long time made up his mind to annex. I well remember the facilities which his functionaries gave me during a visit to Mostar and Sarajevo some time earlier, when one felt somehow that Austria was already in permanent occupation. On the 5th October 1908 Francis Joseph had autocratically extended his rights of sovereignty over these lands. His chief counsellor had been Count Aehrenthal, who in his long official career had at first been disposed to come to an understanding with Russia, but had later on made up his mind that the Empire of the Czars, sadly weakened by an ill-starred war, as well as by internal troubles, was now incapable of resisting any serious attack from without or within. The annexation had been announced in Paris two days before it actually took place, by the Austrian Ambassador, and France, like England, resigned herself, for the sake of peace, to ratify what was an

incursion on European rights. Austria, to do her justice, had been very useful to us in the latter phases of the Algeciras conference; she now was forward to thank us for waiving any objections to her procedure and, in the same year 1908, perhaps as a token of her gratitude, she declined to reclaim an Austrian who had served in our Foreign Legion and been arrested as a deserter, Francis Joseph personally intervening to allay Wilhelm's irritation over this incident. As regards Morocco, Austria pronounced herself wholly disinterested, and her amicable demeanour was reciprocated by the frankness and goodwill of Ministers at the Quai d'Orsay; her partnership in the Triple Alliance seemed to impose no terms to our friendship other than those arising out of our own direct alliances. We very naturally wished that Austria-Hungary—despite the occurrence of 1908—should also be on easy terms with Russia, but, as our Chargé d'Affaires at Vienna, M. Guillemin, had reminded Pichon on the 30th July 1909, efforts had been made in Vienna either to spur France into some inopportune interference, or to drag her into some position which might offend her friends and allies.

"No one would think", so ran the message, "of denying the advantages which accrue from the existing excellent relations between France and Austria from our own, and from the general European, point of view, but we must not forget that the two countries belong to opposite groups. It would be folly ever to think of breaking up the Austro-German association, and in trying it on, we might risk our own alliance with Russia. Baron de Beck, a statesman liberal enough to like France as well as any Teuton can like her, said to me: 'I hope, in the interests of our good relations with France, no one will have any illusion as to the fact that a close alliance with Germany is for Austria a sheer necessity, ethnographic, geographic and economic.'"

Guillemin ended a long report by urging that we must only tender to Austria, and accept from her, what was strictly due: "Our relations with the Imperial Monarchy would thus be more lasting, as free from anything equivocal now, and immune from anything like deception in the future". M. Pichon thought well to send copies of this report to all our representatives at foreign Courts, with the commendation:

" Our Chargé d'Affaires' appreciation of Franco-Austrian relations, from the angle of our Russian alliance, quite fits in with the view taken by my Department, especially when he points out the very likely drawbacks to any closer union between France and the Imperial Government, which I may say is, however, in no way contemplated by our Government here."

In 1911, when our relations with Germany were strained almost to snapping point, Austria was not quite so forward as before to be agreeable to us; Aehrenthal—as M. de Saint Aulaire [1] wrote de Selves (7th December 1911)—had been quick to take his cue from Germany and say that France was responsible for everything that had happened in Morocco, and referring to our march on Fez to rescue our countrymen he had said to our Ambassador, M. Crozier, " You set a very bad example ".

At the very least, we could hope that the Treaty of the 4th November once ratified, Austria, like the other signatories at Algeciras, notably Italy, would unconditionally accept it. But Aehrenthal had nothing in him of the Tzechs, among whom chance caused him to be born; he had no liking for France, and in anything he undertook he was not too fastidious about the means if the end were to his country's advantage. At his suggestion Austria held up her assent and tried to strike a bargain with us. She let us know that, as a set-off to her acquiescence, she would like the Bourse to arrange for considerable loans to herself and Hungary. She had for some time hungered for this favour, which might well involve the application of French savings to Austrian military expenditure; for some time also financiers, either of foreign extraction or recently naturalised, and one or two Austrophile newspapers, had been agitating for this security to be placed on our markets.

Two days after the treaty was signed, de Selves, determined to have none of this nonsense, telegraphed to the Ambassador:

" When Count Aehrenthal wants to discuss the Moroccan business with you, you can let him know that we shall take it very

[1] Succeeded Guillemin as Chargé d'Affaires; later Ambassador to England.

kindly if he hurries up Austrian assent, but that we expect nothing less after our behaviour regarding Bosnia. I don't know what Count Aehrenthal means when he speaks of our disfavouring Austria-Hungary; the question of a loan to her is purely technical and is quite outside the matter of Morocco."

But Aehrenthal dawdled on, and on the 18th November, in a conversation with M. Crozier, made the two things interdependent. He asked our Ambassador to forward a confidential note, which he opened by saying that the perfect harmony which existed between Austro-Hungary and France enabled the Imperial and Royal Government "to view without either apprehension or jealousy the Agreement arrived at in respect of Morocco between the Republic and Germany". This pretty phrase, however, did not precede a formal assent, but had for its sequel:

"We hope that the Government of the Republic will endorse our efforts to make the economic relations between France and Austria correspond with their political attitude towards one another. With this idea in mind, the possibility of floating an Austro-Hungarian loan on the Paris markets is of first-rate importance. The influence of the French Government—however little they may generally see eye to eye with us—would assure the official quotation of our securities. We propose, therefore, when the question of such a loan actually arises, to appeal to the favourable consideration of the Government of the Republic. We shall choose a moment when the international situation seems most propitious, and it will not be a matter of unlimited borrowings but of enabling Austria and Hungary to obtain loans—at intervals extending over several years—of which the total shall not exceed for each kingdom 500 million crowns."

The demand, put into writing by Aehrenthal on the 18th November 1911, was to this effect; "promise to lend us 500,000,000 crowns for Austria and the same amount for Hungary, and we will give our favourable consideration to the Moroccan Convention." It is difficult to understand how these discreditable conditions which Austria attached to her acceptation of a treaty can have been put forward ten years later by imaginative or ill-informed chroniclers as proposals for a political entente with France. Aehrenthal's note suggested that existing political relations between the

Republic and the Empire were entirely satisfactory and that it was a question of one getting financial help from the other. In forwarding the note our Ambassador drew the ugly deduction that on our reply would depend the length or brevity of the formalities which would precede Austrian acceptance of the Franco-German treaty. Thus, in return for bare assent to an agreement, Aehrenthal held out his hand for a loan; whatever a few newspapers may have later alleged, he offered nothing, proposed nothing, promised nothing, and the moment he chose to ask for this pecuniary relief was just when his country was developing her armaments by land and sea, when, under German pressure, she was swelling her Mediterranean fleet and was fashioning the heavy artillery we were during the war to taste in Flanders and Lorraine. To lend money to Austria was probably a very risky adventure, and anyhow it meant paying a preposterous price for a nod of the head from the Dual Monarchy. But our Ambassador had somehow deluded himself into the notion that he could obtain from Austria a counter assurance, such as M. Barrère had secured ten years earlier from Italy, and that he might even draw the House of Hapsburg into a positive alliance with France. Under the glow of this idea he rained on de Selves during the 19th–20th November a telegram, two despatches and a long report from which emerged rather obscurely a plea not to close the doors of the Bourse to the suggested loan. The application, he admitted, was premature. "It would have been better not to mention the subject at the moment or just when it was a question of assenting to the treaty; the assent which Germany in the pourparlers had really guaranteed was far from having the range which Austria had attributed to it." But Crozier fondly thought that the application for a loan might mean an opportunity to secure from Austria and Hungary further guarantees either for the maintenance of peace or against any German act of aggression, and anyhow we should learn how far the terms of the Triple Alliance left her freedom of action. In the course of a long and not very lucid letter, the Ambassador put out what he called a project *de grand secours* which he would have liked to keep in abeyance, only

Aehrenthal's demand seemed to him to necessitate immediate action on our part.

Philippe Crozier regarded his devout wishes as realities, a sure sign—according to Bossuet—of a disordered mind. His original plan was to wait for a German invasion to buy Austrian neutrality at the cost of a milliard of crowns. But as Aehrenthal wanted the money down, the Ambassador timidly suggested that we must either refuse point blank, or accept with the condition of guarantees, himself favouring the last course, without being altogether blind to its obstacles.

" The opposition ", he wrote, " offered by the German Ambassador, who is probably backed by the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, imposes on the Minister a circumspection perhaps difficult to reconcile with what we should require and which the commitments of the Monarchy would render difficult to grant, especially if secrecy had to be observed."

Crozier's ideas were not only nebulous and chimeric, but even if they could have been realised, Austria's neutrality would have been a very dubious insurance for peace. What would have happened supposing Germany had declared war against France while Germany and Austria together had taken up arms against Russia ? This was a hypothesis our good Crozier did not foresee, but it was by no means unthinkable. In August 1914, after Germany had invaded our country, Austria plumed herself for some days on remaining neutral as regards us. Her Ambassador did not ask for his passports, and seemed to nourish the hope that our relations would remain unimpaired, and eventually it was France who was forced to say that as a state of war existed between two partners of the Triple Alliance and our official ally, Russia, we must consequently be at war with Austro-Hungary.

Far from having to deal with a concrete proposition, de Selves was confronted with something purely nugatory. So when on the 1st December Count Szeczen called on him to talk about the Treaty and alluded to the desired loan, the Minister said the two subjects were not, and could not be, linked together; that the second would be gone into in

due time; that it behoved the Austrian Government to settle the first with the minimum of delay; and that he had notified our Ambassador to this effect.

Some days later, Crozier being, as often happened, away, St. Aulaire wrote that Aehrenthal, anxious to recover the prestige which the failure of his Italian policy had cost him, was taking soundings on all sides, and trying to keep every door open without committing himself to any step. St. Aulaire saw the rather bewildered and baffled Count successively, and sometimes simultaneously, approaching the various Powers in view of mediation in the Italo-Turkish War, "making up" equally to Rome and Constantinople, flirting with Bulgaria without dropping his purpose of a rapprochement with Russia, and, having tried first one thing and then the opposite, coming back to his original point and immolating the Chief of the General Staff on the altar of Austro-Italian friendship. Aehrenthal looked to the loan as likely to bring great credit to himself, but only succeeded in making it look like an attempt to drive a bargain at the suggestion of Germany, and this increased the already sufficient difficulties attaching to it.

A fortnight later St. Aulaire reported that the Russian Ambassador had spoken to him about the projected deal and said that the cash could only be used for military material which would be directed against Russia. "There is no pretence here," our well-informed Secretary of Embassy told us, "but that the money is required to carry out the naval and military programmes, and if it, or any part of it, is not so employed, it will only mean that corresponding funds will be released under the budget for the purpose. . . . The pecuniary help is indispensable to complete, if not to start, the proposed armaments."

The financial schemes elaborated in Berlin as well as Vienna, which de Crozier ingenuously recommended but which M. St. Aulaire saw would not hold water, were to come to nothing, and, de Selves having shown Count Aehrenthal how hopeless it was for him to try and haggle, Austria decided, at the end of the year, to give her formal benediction to the Treaty.

There had been of course rumours on the European Stock Exchanges of these attempts to fly an Austrian kite, and on the 16th December the *Lokal Anzeiger* had a paragraph to the effect that the Austro-Hungarian Government had told the French and German Embassies that approval would be given, on general principles, to the Treaty, but that formal assent in writing would not be forthcoming at the moment. The next day the *Neue Freie Presse*, almost taking its cue from Crozier, suggested that if Austria postponed her declaration of adherence to the Treaty, it was because she wished first to regularise certain economic international questions. The story, or a version of it, was circulated in Paris, and during a debate on the Treaty in the Chambre, Jaurès, smarting under the price France had paid for an Agreement with Germany, exclaimed: "It is not all over even now; Austria is imposing conditions"; and when de Selves murmured a diplomatic denial, M. Jaurès referred him to the newspapers. The Foreign Minister then announced that Austria had definitely disclaimed the idea of mixing up the Treaty with any financial proposition, but Jaurès was so caustic in his further comments—and evidently so sceptical—that Caillaux had to intervene and give the weight of his authority to his colleague's tepid statement which incidentally, however, pulled down poor Philippe Crozier's house of cards.

The match, however, which he had set alight continued to burn with more smoke than flame until the French Government, on the 2nd January 1912, issued to the Press a definite denial that any financial negotiations were, or had been, afoot with Austria. De Selves also, having been informed by the Russian Ambassador that his country would look very amiss on any French contribution to Austrian coffers, warned the Finance Minister against any overtures from banks or financiers likely to be interested in placing a loan on the market.

This was how things stood when I took over office, and a few days after I came to the Quai d'Orsay, Count Aehrenthal fell ill, and on the 17th February he was no more. The first idea was that he should be succeeded by Count Burian, then

Finance Minister, but the Archduke Heir Apparent did not think Germany would find him sufficiently pliable, and to please the Kaiser he strongly urged the appointment of Count Berchtold, who was a great aristocrat, and with knowledge of public affairs, but lacking in authority and weak in character. Crozier hit him off exactly in saying that in stormy weather he would tack cleverly, but would be unable to direct his helm vigorously enough to avoid a disaster. I hastened to send the family of Count Aehrenthal every expression of sympathy from the French Government, and forthwith set myself to show our desire to keep up the traditional amity with Austria. As regards State loans, we of course took our stand precisely where de Selves had stood, but did nothing to impede the flotation of foreign loans, such as the Credit Foncier of Hungary and some Hungarian railway debentures, which had no armaments in their folds, and it was a new issue of Austrian Credit Foncier in the autumn which drew upon us a frown from Russia.

I had seen Crozier before his return to Vienna, and confirmed the instructions de Selves had given him, but the dreamer had no sooner resumed his post than his rosy dreams began again. The Grand Duke André of Russia, the third son of the Grand Duke Vladimir, had, on his way back from Sofia early in February, paid his respects to the Emperor ; the French Ambassador saw in this simple mark of respect and courtesy, signs of a definite rapprochement between Austria and Russia. He regretted that Caillaux had not discreetly fixed up this entente and kept Germany outside it, and after enunciating this peculiar idea of promoting peace, he proceeded : " At the beginning of 1910 Austria and Russia had shown, quite platonically, that there was nothing to keep them apart. This was the first stage. They now think it would be to their advantage to come to terms. The visit of the Grand Duke André marks the beginning of the second stage of this rapprochement ; " and he proceeded to express his confidence that the improvement in Austro-Russian relations would bring with it closer friendship between France and Austria. Such a double

result was devoutly to be desired, but when Crozier came to the crux of his letter he became a little vague. "All this depends on us; when the moment comes I shall suggest our procedure with full details." Crozier in his next despatch repeated that for three years he had reminded the French Government how vital it was not to let Russia and Austria draw together—as they were sure to do—without our co-operation. Our Ambassador at St. Petersburg, M. Georges Louis, was very sceptical as to his colleague's forecast, and suggested that if Russia did anything to improve her relations with Austria, it would be in order to watch her and keep a hand on her in the Balkans. But Crozier persistently pronounced for an entente between France, Austria and Russia, to ensure the independence of Italy, no less than of Austria, in respect of Berlin; a fine and bold plan, only we were not told how Berlin would view it, or how it was to be carried out. Crozier continued his gentle stream of hopes and fears, and clung to the belief that if only he were allowed to fix the stakes, he would succeed in detaching Austria from the clutches of the Kaiser. But on the 25th March, just when our Ambassador thought his object was in sight, Wilhelm came to Vienna, as the guest of the old Emperor and in his character of chief of the Triple Alliance, and had a long interview with Count Berchtold, who confided nothing of it to Crozier. The Kaiser then left for Corfu; at Venice he greeted the King of Italy, but instead of going thence direct to Achilleion, the imperial yacht carried him to the Fasana Canal; he steamed past the Austro-Hungarian squadron, landed on the island of Brioni, where he met the Archduke Franz Ferdinand—clad in the uniform of a German admiral—visited the fortifications, and then made his way to Corfu. Crozier, ever star-gazing, overlooked these omens, and still persuaded himself that Austria, regardless of Germany, would pin her faith to him.

It was not St. Aulaire only who warned us against the constant illusions of his Chief, for our Consul-General at Budapest wrote to me:

"Austria thinks of dividing up Turkey. The moment seems to her good for a move towards Albania and thus through

Monastir to Salonika. This is in the minds of Austro-Hungarian militarists, and no doubt Macedonia has been dangled before Ferdinand; Roumania is smothered with kindness, so that she may hope for the Bulgarian quadrilateral."

From Sofia came the same report. Our representative, M. Dard, on the 24th February was denouncing to us the "insolent and provocative attitude" which the Austro-Hungarian functionaries in Bosnia were adopting towards the Serbs and the "dangerous intrigues" which their consuls were weaving in Albania and Macedonia. These rumbles did not disturb Crozier's sense of security, but the French Government had by now decided to replace him by a diplomatist who would live a little less in the clouds, and Klotz was asked to offer him a post in an important business house, which the outgoing Ambassador gracefully accepted and admirably filled.

When Crozier presented his "letters of recall", the Emperor, after paying him the usual personal compliments, spoke effusively of the good relations between the two countries as better than ever in the last thirty years.

The veteran monarch had much to say in praise of our troops in Morocco, and Crozier ended his last despatch (23rd April) with "the Emperor said how glad he was to see at the head of the French Government a statesman of the worth which every one recognises in Your Excellency. He desires me to renew to the President his expression of sincere sympathy and goodwill."

However pacific his words, the Emperor did not conceal his grave fear that peace had become more precarious in the last eight months; his reference was to the summer of 1911, and he seems not to have believed that the 4th November Treaty had dissipated many anxious considerations.

A few days after the departure of Crozier, St. Aulaire wrote to me that no further mention of the loan was made in the Press; the project had vanished into thin air, and it was to be hoped that the Austrian Government would not bring up again a question fraught with danger. He correctly foretold that Count Berchtold would in a forthcoming speech emphasise the identity of French and German points of view

as regards the East, but would allude with some coolness to Russia. "Our specially good relations with France", so pronounced the Austrian Foreign Minister, "are due to our having no conflicting interests. This is specially true as regards the East. French diplomacy, like ours, is conservative in character and strives to prevent the gathering of any clouds there. We can well appreciate this pacific harmony of action as an important asset in our political balance sheet."

Saint Aulaire could, however, find no sign of any happier feeling towards Russia in the country to which he was accredited.

"I agree with our Ambassador in St. Petersburg", he wrote, "that the two Governments are actuated by the same spirit of mistrust and only draw together in order to keep an eye, and if necessary a hand, on one another. M. Giers noted that the Court of Vienna has not bestirred itself to return the visit of the Grand Duke André and has pleaded the absence of the Czar for the delay. The relations between the two countries must be carefully watched, and if Count Berchtold spoke of their friendly development, the wish must have been father to the thought. It is even suggested that the emphasis laid on the concord between France and Austria regarding the East was intended as a backhander for Russia."

Count Berchtold was now pleased to give us a graceful token of goodwill. M. Paul Deschanel—who was about to be a candidate for the Presidency of the Chambre—happened to be passing through Vienna from a visit to the Balkans; the Foreign Minister heard of this and also that Deschanel was very anxious that an unfortunate speech of his, in which, curiously enough, he was supposed to have prophesied the downfall of the Dual Monarchy, should be forgotten. An audience with the Emperor was arranged; the Foreign Minister gave a breakfast—where not the ghost of an allusion to any loan was made; the Press was warned to deal in cordial phrases, and the greeting accorded to the distinguished Frenchman was currently said to have exceeded in fervour that given to President Roosevelt.

To succeed Crozier the name of M. Dumaine was submitted to the Emperor, and accepted with evident, and entire, satisfaction.

The new Ambassador had only just taken over his duties when the Czar of Bulgaria, accompanied by his two sons and his Prime Minister, and the King of Montenegro, arrived at Schönbrunn; at a gala dinner the Emperor spoke of the "wisdom of the Czar of Bulgaria, whose kingdom forms, in the Balkans, an element of good order and tranquillity", a speech calculated, as Dumaine wrote, to give Ferdinand a delicious glow. In order to enjoy this to the full, Ferdinand went on to Berlin, and at Potsdam chanted aloud a flowery eulogy of the German army. Meanwhile at Vienna King Nicholas was receiving the Colonelcy of an Austrian regiment and being solemnly thanked for having assisted the Austro-Hungarian monarchy to keep the peace in the Balkans, a peace which, a few weeks later, he was himself rudely to break.

The Bulgarian Prime Minister, M. Guéchoff, has told us[1] it was here and now that ideas were first exchanged as to Bulgaria and Montenegro taking concerted action. Servia, Greece and Bulgaria had already come to terms, but no agreement had been signed with Montenegro. Guéchoff had taken the opportunity to give rendezvous at Vienna to some Bulgarian politicians on their return from Livadia, to M. Theodoroff, who was coming from Paris, and to M. Rizoff, Minister in Rome. They met to talk four-square as to the Balkan States eventually taking arms against Turkey if the latter should provoke a conflict, or if Italy should carry her war into the Balkans.

"Before M. Rizoff's arrival," M. Guéchoff writes, "I had left with the King for Berlin, and on returning to Vienna I found that he had apparently fixed up things with the Montenegrin Premier at Hofburg, where they were dwelling, and I left Vienna under the impression that Montenegro was coming in with us. In July our Minister at Cettinge wrote to me with a proposal from King Nicholas as to joint action."

So it was at Vienna, in the Imperial Palace itself, that Bulgars and Montenegrins put their heads together to talk over a Balkan war. How can one suppose that Austria was ignorant of what was going on under her nose? It

[1] *La genèse de la guerre mondiale*, also *La débâcle de l'Alliance Balkanique*.

was anyhow at the same moment that the Austro-Hungarian Government was making a great effort to pass the Bill for the new military laws. At Budapest this was a lamentable affair. The old conflict between Parliament and the Crown had been revived; the opposition of the Independents had been aroused, scenes of violence occurred in the Chambre; the President, Count Tiza, had to send for the police and turn out some of the members, and forcibly secure the vote which the Dual Government required. At Vienna the members behaved like lambs; it was the triumph of the Imperialists and Militarists, and on the same day both Houses passed a law which provided an army of 2,000,000 men. It was thus that in Vienna—where the Emperor in rapture hastened to congratulate the Prime Minister—and in Berlin peace was ensured while France was taking no step to increase her armed forces. A fortnight later the joint Ministry met to discuss the Budget and also the special Army estimates for which the proceeds of the proposed loan had been earmarked. "The amount required for the extraordinary military credit", Dumaine wrote, "is not less than 250,000,000 crowns." The greater part was to be spent on the artillery and fortifications, with a considerable sum allotted to aviation, but the special military demands had finally to give way before the purely financial objections raised by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The condition of Austrian finance, the Ambassador informed us, was such that it was impossible for the moment to float any internal loan. It was therefore quite clear that Austria, unable to provide herself for her military needs, had in 1911-12 turned her longing and hungry eyes towards Philippe Crozier.

It was one thing for France to regard Austria as a friend; it was quite another to supply her with arms and ammunition. I had promised—and there was no one in either Parliamentary assemblies who gainsaid me—to strengthen, not to weaken, our own alliances.

CHAPTER X

Russian Alliance—Its origin and development—Advantages and difficulties—M. Kokovtzoff—M. Isvolsky—Misunderstandings of 1911 provoked by Russian Ambassador—His correspondence of 1912—Fable and fact.

Our foreign policy, which I had constantly defined in Parliament, rested "on the maintenance of our friendships and alliances" according to the formula of my predecessors in office. It would have been more accurate to speak of our alliance and friendships, for France then had only one ally, Russia, her conclusive arrangements with England and Italy being of a later date. The Triple Alliance had been instituted at a period when Germany could not pretend there was any danger of her being encircled, for France, defeated in arms, was isolated, and in case of attack could only depend on herself. The Triple Alliance stood out on the continent of Europe as something mysterious and to be dreaded. No one in France or Russia then suspected the clauses it contained and which only recently have been revealed—the Agreement between Austria and Italy as to the Near East, the secret Treaty between Germany and Italy as to the Mediterranean policy, the whole preceded by an Anglo-Italian understanding which was notified to, and approved by, Austria.

I was quite a newcomer to Parliament when the Emperor Alexander III. made his first gesture towards France. In the year 1888 he had received a visit from the Kaiser, and when he returned it in October 1889 he described himself as satisfied with what his Imperial host had said to him. He was, however, fully conscious that the balance of Europe had been upset by the grouping of the Central Powers.

In the following spring the Grand Duke Nicholas came to

Paris, saw M. de Frezcinet, who was both Prime Minister and War Minister, and urged on him the value of active Russian sympathy with France. In August Wilhelm betook himself to the Russian manœuvres, to which the French Chief of the Staff had been invited, and the following year Admiral Gervais and his fleet were rapturously received at Cronstadt, and M. Giers, the Foreign Minister, told our Ambassador that the moment seemed ripe to go forward on the path of an entente. M. de Laboulaye let M. Ribot know this, and the Russian Ambassador reminded him that the Triple Alliance was expending itself in armaments and that only a Franco-Russian Alliance could maintain the military equilibrium of Europe. Ribot at once informed the President of these overtures, who lent them a most favourable ear. M. Carnot often spoke to me while I was a Minister on the subject, and from M. de Frezcinet's papers, and from much that I heard after Carnot fell under the assassin's knife, I know how forward and energetic a part he played in the formation of a definite alliance. Throughout 1891 and 1892 conversations, first political and then military, were diligently carried on, but it was not until the end of 1893 that the Emperor's signature was obtained for the convention which had for some time been drawn up. Two months earlier Paris had witnessed a great ovation when Admiral Avalane and the officers of the Squadron which M. Carnot had just reviewed at Toulon were the guests of honour at a fête which, as Minister of Fine Arts, I organised at the Opera. At Toulon the President had drunk to the health "of the two great nations, and through them to the peace of the world", and in Paris we could heartily thank our new ally for our new sense of security. The protracted negotiations showed that nothing could be done in Russia except by the personal and autocratic will of the Emperor, and that on the Imperial goodwill must depend the future of the entente. When the Czar went to Kiel in June 1892, and when he sent the Czarevitch to Berlin in January 1893, the French Government had no spasms of anxiety, but had no knowledge of the exact details of interviews which the two monarchs enveloped in mystery. In November 1894

Alexander succumbed to a terrible illness, and Nicholas II., who had married a German Princess, rather increased the conditions of seclusion which attached to his Throne. Four months after his accession, the German Ambassador, Count Munster, brought M. Hanotaux, the Foreign Minister, an invitation to the fêtes for the inauguration of the Kiel Canal. I was at that time in charge of Public Instruction, and I well remember how the invitation perplexed him. He was at first disposed to decline it, but feared that if Russia accepted and we refused, and if there were some demonstration of German ill-feeling towards us, our newly found friendship might be nipped in the bud. Our Ambassador[1] was asked to make inquiries of the young Emperor, who wrote in his own hand that he was sending ships for the occasion and expected us to do the same. This removed any doubt, and the French Government only stipulated that their vessels might be back in time to take part in the years mind of President Carnot, and that no German ship bearing the title of a French defeat in 1870 should figure at the ceremony. Germany said she was quite agreeable, but our acceptance of her invitation had scarcely left our lips when the Kaiser repaired to Friedrichsruhe to give Prince Bismarck on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the war a sword of honour with the arms of Alsace-Lorraine engraved with those of the old Chancellor. Then the *Woerth* was brought from the Mediterranean expressly to appear at Kiel before the French ships, and when Kiel was over there was a celebration of all the battles, from Wissemburg to Sedan, which we had lost in 1870. This was the way in which our courtesy was repaid. The Emperor Nicholas did not remain for long as an enigma to France. The three successive Presidents, Faure, Loubet and Fallières, paid him visits which he returned, and a very agreeable ritual marked these exchanges of courtesy. The Emperor was simple and affable, and very discreet as to his relations with his consort's cousin.[2] "Willy" flattered himself that he had considerable influence over "Nicky", and used this to send through St. Petersburg proposals which

[1] M. de Montebello.

[2] Considerable light has been lately thrown on their correspondence.

he would never have addressed direct to us. Thus in 1900 he succeeded in placing under Marshal Waldersee's command the international force sent to re-establish order in China. So also, from 1904 onwards, he tried to set "Nicky" against England and bring about through him a rupture between her and France. On the 29th October 1904 he proposed to the Czar an agreement which would put a term "to the insolence of England and Japan".

"Nicky" suffered himself to be tempted, then thought better of it, asked loyally if he might inform France, was refused permission, and so refused to sign. But "Willy" was not to be put off. He tried the same thing again in 1905, when he knew "Nicky" was disturbed by the naval defeat of Tsoushima, by the impossibility of resisting the victorious Japanese, and by the first growls of the Revolution.

The Imperial yachts meet on the 23rd July in the Gulf of Finland, and now "Willy" tries to entice "Nicky" to turn his back on England and even to join up with Germany against her; he shows him a Treaty of Alliance completely drawn up, and is in turn threatening and coaxing to obtain his signature; he slimily suggests that during the war with Japan France left Russia in the lurch, while Germany stood by her, and he says that "Nicky" may go so far as to ask France to drop the Entente Cordiale and come in with them. "Nicky" allows himself to be got round; in the absence of his Ministers he signs the paper thrust into his hand with an Admiral and a Chamberlain as witnesses. Happily, on his return he has the good sense to tell Count Lamsdorff, who opens his eyes to what he has done; otherwise we should have had to break with either England or Russia. The incident closes with "Nicky" writing to "Willy" that he must postpone indefinitely the putting the Treaty into force. But "Willy" was not beaten. He asks "Nicky" if he may communicate the Treaty to Count Witte, a supposed Germanophile of whom the Czar spoke to me disparagingly in July 1914. But Witte, who had just seen President Loubet and our Foreign Minister in Paris, knew that the French Government could not be party to any combination directed

against England and would do nothing to aid and abet the Kaiser. The Czar's signature was not cancelled, but the text was completed by a clause which safeguarded the defensive alliance of France and Russia. At other times "Willy" had other tricks in his box. He sought to stir up "Nicky" against our democratic institutions; he played on his cousin's autocratic pretensions and painted the advantages of an alliance between three Emperors; or he would try to make him believe that England and France were preparing for another Crimean campaign; the tempter was always ready with new bait and cunning traps. The Czar lived a very simple life and was by no means accessible even to Ambassadors, so that, in a sense, the face of Russia was always veiled. These defects in our alliance were the constant theme of politicians and writers. Charles Maureas represented Russia as a nation only half educated, shaken by ethnical and religious troubles and exploited by a highly venal administration. Anatole France hotly denounced Czarism as reactionary and as the centre of international capitalism, and he was not wrong in laying a heavy finger on the secrecy of the Treaty. But it was the Emperor himself who had imposed this secrecy. "I would like the convention examined only by the French President and M. Ribot, in whom I have entire confidence", he told General Boisdeffre. "If it comes before a council of Ministers I fear that it will get to be known and, as far as I am concerned, the whole thing will fizzle out." The Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries therefore kept very dark the wording of the contract, and I only had a vague idea of what was going on. The first thing I did on taking office was to open the "iron safe" and extract the 1892 document from its envelope, on which was pinned in Felix Faure's handwriting, "The military convention is accepted by M. Giers' letter to M. de Montebello, giving the status of Treaty to this convention".

The Treaty surely bears on its face its wholly defensive and pacific character and throws a clear light on the conduct of France in 1912 and the succeeding years. But even after its ratification by the Czar the word "alliance" was not

used until Félix Faure paid his visit to Russia, and the term then caused something of a sensation.

When we put out a hand to England, and especially when in 1907 the Anglo-Russian arrangement put a truce to the old competition between the bear and the whale, the Triple Entente was already duly constituted. There were the two International European groups, one in the centre, the other on the circumference, one going ahead of the other and indeed rendering the other necessary, one far more compact and homogeneous, and seemingly more stable, which reached out to Bucharest, Sofia and Constantinople. There was not necessarily any hostility between the two groups, and not even the Tangier, Casablanca and Agadir coups arrested the flow of communication between Berlin and Paris. The double system had given a good account of itself and contributed to the continuance of peace: certainly no French Government would have lifted a finger to interrupt it. However difficult the manipulation of our Russian convention, however sharp the contrast between the two peoples, we must stick to our Triple Entente, for to shirk, or forswear, it would have been at once to annoy England and aggrandise Germany.

During the stress of 1911 Russia stood loyally by us, but her Ambassador, M. Isvolsky, who was always playing off his own bat, went near to making us very uncomfortable. The moment de Selves knew of the arrival of the *Panther* off Agadir, he got into touch with St. Petersburg, and on the 8th July heard from our Ambassador that Russia would fulfil all her obligations. On the 29th July, when things looked blacker, M. Louis was urged, if necessary, to ask for an audience of the Sovereign, and within forty-eight hours the reply came, "If it comes to fighting Germany, Russia will give us not only diplomatic but military support".

This must be remembered in view of my giving the same assurances to Russia in the Balkan crisis when it would have been as treacherous to fail her as for her to have failed us the year before. Then, however, Isvolsky stepped in. On the 21st August de Selves telegraphed to Louis

that Isvolsky had called on him to say it would be a pity if pourparlers with Berlin were to break down just because France wants to add a few square miles to some territory she would have ceded to Germany. Russia would keep her word, but there would be difficulty in getting public opinion to favour her taking the field for a question of Morocco. Isvolsky had also said that the alliance was defensive in character and France must be conciliatory. The Foreign Minister was rather taken aback by Isvolsky's tone, and asked if it reflected feeling in Russia, to which Georges Louis, on the 22nd August, replied that Isvolsky was still smarting under his personal set-back of 1909. When his country nearly came to blows with Austria over Herzegovina, Isvolsky had to be sharply told that Russia must avoid any risk of a war in which her interests were not at stake and in which France might be reluctant to join her; he was now giving France a taste of the bit which had jerked his own mouth. "Whether Russia asked help in arms from France or the converse," Louis telegraphed, "the alliance can only bear its full fruit if preliminary concerted plans are laid." This telegram was quickly followed by another of assurance that Russia would give us unstinted support, and urging that a joint exhaustive study of the situation should be promptly made. Isvolsky was not to be shaken, and hurriedly suggested to his Government they should mediate between France and Germany. The suggestion was highly favoured by the *Novoie Vremia*, and our Ambassador was at once informed by de Selves that his Government would not hear of such a thing. For a day Russia, or rather M. Neratoff, seemed to hesitate [1] and to haggle over the word "defensive" in the draft

[1] Louis thought that a word, which was misunderstood in Russia, caused the hold-up. General Dubail had gone to St. Petersburg to confer with the Russian General Staff, and had proposed to delete "defensive" from the preamble of the Convention. This because he foresaw the possibility—in the event of war—of the Allied army having to act strategically on the offensive. De Selves at once explained this to the Russian authorities, and on the 1st September the matter was cleared up. General Dubail and Gilinsky decided not to touch the text of the military convention, but only to put on record in their report the opinion—already expressed in 1910—that the word "defensive" was not to influence the conduct of operations.

Treaty, but on the 1st September the Czar declared definitely, through General Gilinsky, that he would keep his engagement to the last letter, that—in all good faith—he emphasised the strong reasons for avoiding war, but that this did not imply the slightest withdrawal of whole-hearted support. "The Entente is perfect and perfectly satisfactory," Louis joyfully telegraphed. It was evident that Neratoff's hesitation had been inspired, not by the Czar but by his old chief Isvolsky, who tried to goad him into attempted mediation, while the Czar, the Grand Dukes, the War Minister, and all the Generals were faithful to the text and spirit of the Convention.

Just when this misunderstanding was blowing over, Isvolsky again called at the Foreign Office and, insinuating that he was officially inspired, insisted that in the *haute intérêt* of Russia our differences with Germany must be made up, and trotted out his usual arguments that Russia would never go to war for the sake of some strips of colonial territory. De Selves telegraphed to the Ambassador that he must press for an audience with the Sovereign; apparently the Ambassador did not press hard enough, for a month elapsed before the audience was granted, when Louis could represent to His Majesty that we only asked for what had been promised by his Imperial father and himself, and could point out the importance of our stake in Morocco. The Emperor desired him to let it be known that he gave his entire consent to the declaration of General Gilinsky, who had "authoritatively affirmed the desire of the Imperial Government to fulfil scrupulously the obligations imposed by the military convention". It was also to be laid down that whereas in the preamble the two Chiefs of Staff had used the words "defensive war", it was to be understood that the Russian and French armies might find it absolutely necessary to assume a vigorous, and as far as possible simultaneous, offensive.

De Selves had thought it right to inform our Ambassador at Berlin as to Isvolsky's demeanour, and that Germany seemed to be finding an auxiliary in the Russian Ambassador. Jules Cambon replied (on the 6th September):

"One can only attribute Isvolsky's attitude to his insistence on coming down to the footlights and on his extraordinary lapses of memory with regard to the Bosnian affair. The audience which Louis will have to-day or to-morrow with the Emperor will no doubt adjust matters, but we must not forget the ill service which Isvolsky has tried to render us."

I venture to emphasise certain documents, which respect for the Ambassador of an Allied Power did not allow us to publish in 1911–12, and as to which the Yellow Book on Morocco was obliged to keep silent because they light up passages in the correspondence with M. Isvolsky, which the Soviets have circulated far and wide. When I came to the Quai d'Orsay I only knew Isvolsky slightly, but I knew enough to cause me to be on my guard against him. I noticed how completely he played for his own hand, and did not hesitate to substitute his own ideas for those of his Government, or to interpret in his own way instructions which he received or replies which were given him at the Quai d'Orsay. Despite his physiognomy, which was that rather of a Tartar than of a European, he had all the mental alertness of a highly-cultivated Slav. He spoke fluently French, German and English, and so far from enveloping his thoughts in silence, he seemed to drown them in a flood of words. The French Ministers were, however, obliged to bear stoically with his tortuous methods because he was, after all, the representative of an Allied Power, and unfortunately the autocracy of that Allied Power was personified by an Emperor so remote and so reserved that misunderstandings and miscarriages were not infrequent owing to lack of mutual information.

Another conclusion must be drawn from the happenings of 1911. During the crisis of Agadir, when we saw the Russian Ambassador looking about for some pretext to enable his country to swerve from its allegiance, we protested indignantly, we appealed to the Emperor himself and reminded Russia that, in face of Germany, her co-operation, both diplomatic and military, was our due; nor did Selves or Louis ever for a moment admit that Russia could seek refuge in mediation; they claimed from her the full part of

an Ally. How, therefore, a year later, when the Balkans provided as serious a crisis for Russia as Morocco provided for us, could France do precisely what she reproached Isvolsky for trying to do? She might, and did, counsel moderation, but if she had made any attempt to assign to herself the part of a spectator or an arbiter, she would have been disloyal to her given word. The Russian alliance was not always an easy machine to handle, but I could rely happily and entirely on the good faith and good-will of M. Kokovtzoff, whose authority as Prime Minister was not supreme,[1] but whose influence was necessarily considerable.

My Cabinet was throughout 1912 kept closely informed of every detail of our foreign policy in all its continuity, and with all its efforts first to prevent, then to localise and finally to put a term to the Balkan War; the closest scrutiny of our procedure would fail to detect any particle of malevolence or mischief-making in our diplomacy. During the war, Germany accused Great Britain of having premeditated hostilities, and she tried to make good all the ex-Kaiser's shots against King Edward VII. and British Imperialism; after the Russian Revolution she veered round and laid on Czarism the responsibility for all ills. Since his death, Isvolsky has been made into a sort of legendary person, a great international conspirator, a mysterious and maleficent genius. German propaganda has kindly added, as regards myself, that sometimes I was the accomplice of this adventurous diplomatist, and that, in the hopes of reconstituting Lorraine, I took part in his calculated perversities, while at other times I am represented as having been wholly under his thumb and as having placed Republican France in a humiliating position as under-dog to Imperial Russia. However incomplete and disordered the papers published by the Soviet, or anyhow their translation in the Black Book, no careful reader of Friedrich Stieve's four volumes can endorse any of the German interpretation of them.

On the 6th July 1922, two Communist deputies had a question in the Chambre as to the Soviet publication. M.

[1] Stieve, vol. iii. p. 390, shows Kokovtzoff apologising to the Czar for incidentally dealing in matters of foreign policy.

Herriot, in reply, said that it was a matter not of ideas, but of facts; whether or no the Republic, either through her Ministers or her President, had the slightest responsibility for the abominable crime of 1914. "Page by page," he said, "I have pored through the Black Book, and I can affirm that the conclusions which I draw from them are wholly different from those suggested by the two Communist deputies".

If, however, anybody, in any part of the world, has swallowed with eyes shut the German version of the Soviet output, I can fairly say that French papers already known or yet unknown, which I am about to publish, will show the full measure of their erroneousness. For instance, German and pro-German writers take one telegram of the 14th June 1912 (Stieve, vol. ii. p. 144), and they say:

"Look at the French Government of 1912; they want to give to the Russian Alliance so exclusive and so jealous a character that they are nervous as to a projected meeting between William II. and Nicholas II. Russia, they think, should not have any friendly relations with Germany."

On what does this allegation rest? On an incomplete and distorted phrase torn from its context. It is true that when I heard of the impending meeting, I confided to Isvolsky my fear lest matters affecting the East should be discussed without the knowledge of England or France. I warned him that I should tell Georges Louis we must not be put aside when decisions were being taken, a warning the more necessary because the Kaiser was perpetually pin-pricking the Czar against their cousin of England. In a second telegram, indeed, Isvolsky is careful to note that I showed no nervousness as to the stability of Franco-Russian relations but that I was anxious as to some initiative on the part of the Kaiser. I told him, he says, that the best way to avoid all surprise and save us all annoyance would be for England, Russia and ourselves to come to some arrangement beforehand.

Why did I hanker after some such arrangement? Because the Russian Government had, to my knowledge, just disagreed with France and England on the question of intervening to end the weary Italo-Turkish warfare.

Sazonoff had erased from the text on which Paris and London had agreed, a clause which I thought vital, a clause under which the intervening powers were to declare themselves disinterested in the issues of the war. Sazonoff had begun by saying that he feared Austria and Germany would consider the phrase levelled against them, but after Isvolsky had written to St. Petersburg that the objection to the clause had produced "an extraordinarily bad impression" on me, the Russian Minister on the 5/18th June let drop something very significant. He no longer spoke of possible Austrian and German susceptibilities, but he persisted—for quite another reason—in his refusal of the words which displeased him. "Russia", he said, "has given practical proof that she has no wish to utilise the war for any sort of personal end, but her signature to an international act with these words would be interpreted both at home and in the Slav States as a renunciation of her time-honoured policy in the Balkans". Isvolsky did not convey the opinion to me in quite such crude terms, but now that I know the text of the telegram I think that I had even more reason than I then supposed to try and ascertain Russia's exact intentions before the famous interview. It was because I did not grasp the dislike of St. Petersburg for the "disinterested" clause, or rather because I guessed at it too accurately, that Isvolsky, after seeing me on the 19th June, telegraphed to his chief: "To-day I have again had to encounter a regular tempest".

The war was stirring up Near Eastern questions, in which the interests of France differed sharply, not only from the interests of Germany, but from those of Russia; my Cabinet simply wished to prevent any Imperial decision being registered, whether deliberately or inadvertently, which might be in direct conflict with our wishes, or might entangle us unawares, or—what was equally important—which might be a cause of offence to England, and thus prove a cause of trouble to the Entente. We could not forget that in November 1910 Sazonoff had "sinned by imprudence"[1] and that, in order to get Russia away from

[1] M. Barrère to M. Pichon, 15th February 1911.

England, the Kaiser had induced Nicholas to contemplate the building of a railway to Baghdad under conditions which would not only especially favour German financiers, but would do positive injury to British interests in the Persian Gulf. As we did not want to have any ugly surprises of this kind, we asked for clear and timely information, but we had neither right nor reason to prevent the two Emperors meeting as often as they pleased; far from it. After the royal rendezvous at Port Baltic, Isvolsky himself telegraphed to Sazonoff, "The French Government is highly satisfied with the results of the interview, and considers that it has added to the guarantees of peace". France had no objection to Russo-German friendship; all she asked was that the Triple Entente should not be affected by it. We were therefore very pleased when, on the 16th April 1912, Sazonoff insisted before the Douma on the wholly pacific character of our alliance. "Russia", he stated, "remains firmly attached to an old-established friendship, and to her neighbourly relations with Germany. The Potsdam interview has strengthened this impression, and has clearly exhibited that there are no conflicting interests between the two countries, whether in the Far or the Near East." We should have been still better pleased if this Potsdam interview had passed off without a blunder which ran counter to England. To take another instance of Isvolsky's letters being twisted against the French Government, one can pick out a phrase in which I say to the Ambassador: "It is not enough that Russia should warn France of initiatives she wishes to take; she must consult with us". From this phrase, carefully severed from the context, is drawn the conclusion that the Republic was guilty of asking to be associated in all Russian initiatives, and that she consequently tied herself to Russia's chariot-wheels. The truth lies in the precise converse. In asking Russia to take no definite step without consulting us, I wished to enable France to keep an eye, and if necessary, a restraining hand, on her.

This emerges quite clearly from the Yellow Book, and especially from my telegrams to Paul Cambon and Georges

Louis regarding my conversation with Isvolsky on the 13th March 1912.[1] In the farrago which the Bolshevists brought to light, one can find here and there passages which, if carefully amputated from what precedes and what follows them, are capable of different interpretations, but if one reads the collection as a whole, and especially if one compares them with French official papers, one cannot find the slightest trace of anything which can on any point incriminate the Government of the Republic. Isvolsky, as I knew him and as he appears in his correspondence, was neither an adventurer nor a firebrand: obviously much wrapped up in himself, he was vainglorious rather than selflessly ambitious, but he certainly gave without stint to his country all the resources of a remarkably fertile brain. I was afterwards obliged to report on him to M. Kokovtzoff without mincing my words, and I even tried to secure his removal from Paris. If La Rochefoucauld speaks true, and if it is the property of big men to have big faults, I will freely admit that Isvolsky was a big man, but he was certainly one of those big men whom one would prefer to keep at a distance. But to do him justice, no word ever escaped him which would permit one to think that he was otherwise than sincerely desirous of peace. His confidential correspondence must have contained many passages which would go far to justify our mistrust of him, but one might have searched in vain for the slightest sign of any bellicose intentions. To pick out a few fragments from a ponderous and voluminous mass:

"The events of last summer have demonstrated the great value of the Triple Entente as a powerful factor to maintain the peace and balance of Europe. I would ask, however, not to lose sight of the inestimable harm which would follow from any rupture with England in respect of affairs in Persia." (7th Dec. 1911.)

"M. Poincaré has explained to me that the French Government could not do otherwise than welcome the present attempt

[1] I then asked the Ambassador as to military preparation and said the French Government always understood that Russia would make no move as regards the East without our consent. Isvolsky replied, "There can be no question as to that".

of England and Germany to establish between themselves normal relations, and that this attempt should not give rise to the slightest anxiety in France, nor to any doubt as to the entire loyalty of the British Government. There was much more to be feared if the pourparlers had broken down, for this might have resulted in greatly increased irritation and consequently in a new threat to European peace. The statements of M. Poincaré seemed to me wholly sincere, and I do what I can to confirm his optimism on this subject." (16/29 February 1912.)

" The French Government is very satisfied with the results secured at Port Baltic. More especially the communications made to M. Louis had convinced the French Minister that this interview does much to increase guarantees of peace in Europe, and does nothing to modify the relations of the great Powers among themselves." (5/18 July 1912.)

" Poincaré saw yesterday the Turkish Ambassador, who was very gloomy about Montenegro. The danger seemed so imminent that Poincaré believes it indispensable to proceed at once to an exchange of views between Russia, France and England, so as not to be taken by surprise. He thinks, moreover, that only common action on the part of five great Powers can ward off happenings which might seriously threaten tranquillity in the Near East." (9/22 September 1912.)

" Poincaré has left with me the telegram from their Chargé d'Affaires which contains your objection to the conference proposed. Poincaré thinks that you have slightly misunderstood him. He proposed the conference as an extreme measure to avoid war. He foresaw that in reply to the Austro-Russian communication, Bulgaria would insist on guarantees for the carrying out of reform; he proposes that she should be told that the Powers will meet without delay to discuss this subject. It stands to reason that once military operations have begun, there can be no further question of convening at once a conference. In London, Poincaré's proposal is accepted on condition that Turkey agrees." (Telegram, 29th September 1912.)

The man who drafted letters and telegrams of this sort was certainly not hungering, in 1912, for a European War, and there is everything to show that I could never think of Isvolsky—whatever his faults—as running amok with lighted matches. But he and I disagreed on many points, and on many occasions I had to pull him up sharp: his letters are full of our encounters, and I had often had to complain of

his trying to steal a march on us. Judging others from himself, he imagined it was I personally who was hurt by his stabs at the Alliance. It was because he would not understand that it was the dignity of the Republican Government which in my eyes was assailed that he wrote to Sazonoff of my being proud to a fault, that I could not stand the slightest disregard of my wishes, and that he had to cope with an *amour propre* which was little short of a malady. These amiable comments were part of M. Isvolsky's diplomatic stock-in-trade. Thus, when in February 1912 Russia has the notion of making Italy and Turkey shake hands, and without any previous consultation with England or France she notifies her mediative proposals to Germany and Austria at the same time as to us, I tell Isvolsky that this is scarcely playing the game as regards the alliance, and as I had no idea of France being subject to Russia I put a little sting into my remonstrances. Isvolsky writes to Sazonoff that he has a little softened the rancour displayed by Poincaré over the simultaneous communication of the Russian proposal. "But I must not disguise from you", he goes on, "that his tone was very irritable when he insisted, in similar future cases, on preliminary points of agreement between us. He asked me again and again if I knew anything about our exchange of views with Vienna as to the Balkans. He professed himself ready at any moment to discuss this matter with us, and he gave me to understand that he expected from us with regard to the Vienna pourparlers the same information as London gave him after Lord Haldane's visit to Berlin."

This was written in mid-February 1912, when rumours were afoot as to the intentions of the Balkan States, where the back-wash of the Italo-Turkish war was having ill-effect, and when I was trying to read the future and could not understand the veil of mystery which Russia hung over her talks with other Powers. After having heard me, Isvolsky could not hold me up to blame, but in order to score his point with Sazonoff, he proceeded: "The man who is at once Prime Minister and Foreign Minister is a very powerful personality, and seems to have got together the strongest Cabinet which has been seen for some years. And as far as

I can judge, M. Poincaré besides being a strong is an excessively proud man, and resents bitterly any disregard of his opinion or disapproval of his actions." This was what Isvolsky thought of me. His real object in making this portrait was that he wanted to be kept better informed from St. Petersburg, and in order not to be too vocal on that matter himself, he made a sort of bogey of me. "I find myself", he wrote to his Chief, "wholly uninformed on many questions, some of which are of first-rate importance, and this places me, in regard to M. Poincaré, in a position which is not only difficult, but slightly ridiculous. For instance, I have never received one word as to the Cretan complication; I am totally ignorant as to the pourparlers which have taken place, and are taking place, between the protective Powers, and I know nothing of the proposals made by Sir Edward Grey which have apparently been accepted by St. Petersburg. M. Poincaré perpetually harps on this question, and invites my opinion of it, when I am bound to tell him that I am wholly uninformed as to the line my Government wish to take." This is what Isvolsky had especially in mind. No doubt he found that I was not sufficiently flexible or amenable. He alluded to my mind as "direct to the point of brutality", to my habit of "heading straight for my point", of my "smashing window-panes", and so forth; and when he wished to pay me any compliment, his allusions to my "sincerity" and "frankness" were in order to enforce his own words in the ears of his Government, and to induce them, in the interests of the Alliance, to make some concessions. In the letter in which he bespattered me alternately with blame and praise, Isvolsky suggested that unless satisfaction was accorded to me, I may look around for "new political combinations"; that is to say, that I might make overtures to other Powers besides Russia. Why this uneasy suggestion? Because I had proposed to England and Russia a formula of mediation between Italy and Turkey, in which I had inserted a categorical promise as to the signatory Powers being wholly disinterested, and because this text, which was acclaimed in London, was jibbed at in St. Petersburg.

CHAPTER XI

Isvolsky and the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina—Question of the Narrows in 1911 and 1912—Chinese *consortium*—Gaps in Black Book —Continuity of French policy.

THE events of 1908-9 had filled Isvolsky's soul with a bitterness which not only permeated his own country, but was tasted elsewhere. On the 1st April 1909 M. de Nelidov, the Russian Ambassador in Paris, writes to him :

" The German and Austrian papers have emphasised the success of Austrian diplomacy, and the weight which the dual monarchy will carry in the Balkans. Public opinion in France, as in England, insists that as a consequence there must be a closer drawing together between Russia, France and England, as happened when they took common action in the Austro-Serbian conflict. It is evidently thought that as Germany and Austria have achieved a salient success, the two Western Powers, hand in hand with Russia, should seek to develop systematically their forces ; thus, if the case should arise, they could speak fearlessly with the Triple Alliance (from which Italy would then probably detach herself) and impose terms which would restore the political equilibrium now considerably leaning over towards Germany and Austria."

Sir Arthur Nicolson, then British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, wrote to Sir Edward Grey on the 19th March 1909 :

" It was considered not only in the Press, but also, so far as I have been able to observe and ascertain, in all classes of society, that Russia had suffered a deep humiliation and had renounced the traditional part which she had hitherto played in south-east Europe, and in the prosecution of which she had made such great sacrifices in the past." [1]

[1] *Twenty-five Years*, by Viscount Grey of Fallodon.

The German Professor Foerster was moved to exclaim : " Let one only remember the bitter humiliation inflicted on Russia by the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. A European mandate had placed these territories under an Austro-Hungarian Protectorate, and it needed at least a European decision to permit so radical a change of régime."

General Moukhtar Pasha, formerly Ambassador at Berlin, witnessed : " It was Russia which felt the most directly this Austrian outrage. . . ." [1] Germany, of course, ranged herself on Austria's side, and the Turk notes that Baron Schoen, then Secretary of State, added : " We have not only given our adhesion to the initiative [of Baron d'Aehrenthal] but have also promised our loyal support ". [2] One knows that this loyal support was carried to the point of a German ultimatum presented at St. Petersburg on the 14th March 1909, and that Prince Bülow then piqued himself on having cast the German sword into the scales.[3]

Whether Germany wished to cárry her " loyal support " to the point of encouraging, or anyhow endorsing, so brutal an initiative as Austria now took, was her affair ; Russia could not be otherwise than wounded by it. It was not a matter of Isvolsky or of this or that diplomatist or politician being hurt in his feelings, as some writers have seemed to imagine ; it was Russia herself, and all Russia, who was injured. In 1912, therefore, on the eve of the Balkan war, I had to reckon not only with the fretfulness of Isvolsky, but with the susceptibilities of a Government and a people which three years earlier had been provoked, and had ever since been pin-pricked. I was determined to maintain our alliance, the loss of which would have put us at the

[1] *La Turquie, l'Allemagne et l'Europe.*

[2] *Erlebtes.*

[3] " The deliberate annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which Austria had occupied since the Berlin Treaty, provoked a great European crisis. Russia protested against our high-handed action, and England ranged herself alongside her, the tone of the British Press being even more inflammatory than the Russian. The point of British policy was directed towards Germany rather than towards Austria. It was the first time that the Austro-German alliance was to prove its strength and solidarity within sight of a great conflict. I announced in the Reichstag, without beating about the bush, that Germany would at all costs stick fast to Austria ; the German sword had been thrown into the scales."

mercy of the whims of Germany; I was no less determined to say and do nothing which might encourage anything like reprisals or some rash enterprise. I know that since the war it has been said that the effect of the Franco-Russian alliance ought not to have been extended to Eastern questions. The text of the pact cuts across any such restrictions. In the military convention, France foresaw an attack either by Germany or by Italy backed by Germany; Russia wanted to be protected from any attack which Germany, or Austria backed by Germany, might launch; it was an open secret that difference of opinion was much sharper and much more frequent between St. Petersburg and Vienna than between St. Petersburg and Berlin. We had concluded the alliance to defend our own Eastern frontier; Russia had signed it in order to ward off the attack of a Power whom she recognised as in dangerous competition with her. If the alliance had been limited to dangers which might arise in the West, Russia would have given everything and got nothing in return. The counterpart of the guarantee which she gave us in the West was obviously the guarantee we could give her in the East. No French Government, therefore, could exclude Asia Minor or the Balkans from the programme of the Alliance. It was simply understood that when it was not a question of anything directly foreseen in the pact—such as an Italo-German attack against France or Austro-German attack against Russia—Russia and France would confabulate beforehand as to what had best be done. The question of the Narrows frequently arose, and was one which Russia was in days of yore anxious to bring up at diplomatic conferences. For many years the Empire of the Czars had had no official pretensions as to Constantinople. It was possible that in the back of her mind Russia had not renounced her long-seated ambition, but for the moment she was content only to claim the upkeep of the territorial *status quo*, and her immediate aim was merely to secure, for her commercial fleet as well as for her navy, a permanently free passage from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean and back. Those who have not forgotten the insistence of the Soviet in 1922 to force the doors of the Lausanne Conference, will

understand that it was difficult for Czarism not to follow Russian opinion on this subject. "Bury a Slav desire under a fortress," said Joseph de Maistre. "It will blow it up."

Until after the Great War I was one of those who strove strenuously to avoid this explosion, which as a matter of fact did not occur before the great guns began to fire. It was only later that, contrary to my own feeling, and on the proposal of England, Constantinople was promised to Russia. Between 1912 and 1914 this promise was never made by France, nor, to my knowledge, asked of her; as to the freedom of the passage, Russia never concealed her keenness about this, and before I took office she had clamoured for it several times, and perhaps not always in the happiest way.

In 1908 she thought herself entitled to receive in the Narrows some compensation for the diplomatic fall which had been given her over Bosnia. Above all, she was bent on assuring uninterrupted communication between her meridianal provinces and foreign countries. Isvolsky had worked out a plan which would open the Narrows to warships belonging to the States situated on the banks of the Black Sea. His idea on the whole was well received by the Powers. Paris was sympathetic, and no protest came from Vienna or Berlin; England had recognised the opening of the Narrows as a very good thing in itself, but that it should not be only for the benefit of the Black Sea States, and further, that the consent of Turkey should be obtained. The subject was for the time pigeon-holed, only to be brought out again when Italy and Turkey fell out. Russia then feared that Italy would one day try to force the Dardanelles, when Russia would have to close them—a double fear which time showed not to be groundless. At the end of 1911 Russia again toured the capitals with her proposal, and did not overlook Constantinople. At Vienna on the 30th October, Count Pallavicini had first replied that Austria in principle approved a free passage for Russia's warships; a week later, Count Aehrenthal was a little less distinct, but on the 20th November Count Thurn at St. Petersburg was instructed to say that the Dual Monarchy recognised Russia's special rights in the Narrows, and would only

require some formula to guarantee Austria against any assault from the Russian fleet. In Berlin, after a little shillyshallying, the Russian Ambassador was told that the Imperial Government would raise no objection to Russia arranging matters with Turkey, and at Rome Sazonoff had of course only to invoke the Racconigi Agreement. At Constantinople M. Tcharykoff had orders to put forward a proposal on the lines that the Russian Government undertakes to give effective support to the Ottoman Government for the existing régime in the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, extending it equally to adjacent territory. The Imperial Government, it was prescribed, "is not to oppose the passage of Russian warships through the Narrows, on condition that these ships do not remain there without consent". M. Tcharykoff was enjoined to be gentle in his address, and not to give the appearance of an ultimatum to anything he said. But this Ambassador, who was even more of a political egotist than Isvolsky, added with his own pen to the prescribed formula that Russia would concern herself to establish well-cemented relations between Turkey and the Balkan States, to be based on the maintenance of the *status quo*.

Said Pasha had promised a prompt answer, which of course he did not give, and Sazonoff, annoyed by the delay and by the Ambassador taking so much on himself, ordered the latter to come home. In London, Sir Edward Grey had informed Count Benckendorff he was willing to press on Turkey some such plan of open doors as he had mentioned in 1908, but he had added that it would not be easy to treat at Constantinople while Turkey was at blows with Italy. In Paris, Isvolsky was on the move even before our 4th November Treaty was signed, with a letter from M. Neratoff, who said that Russia would, without any parleying, do what France wished as regards Morocco, and hoped that France would repay her in the same coin where Russia's interests were concerned, and more especially as regards the Narrows. On the 28th September Neratoff told our Chargé d'Affaires how eager Russia was for the solution of the immediate problems, and what weight she attached to

the maintenance of Turkish sovereignty over the Narrows. The same day Isvolsky reminded de Selves of the assurances France had given to Russia in 1908. He proceeded as usual to embroider a little his instructions from Neratoff, and wishing, like Tcharykoff, to score a personal success, he hinted that the policy of the *status quo* was only provisional, and ingenuously asked what France would do if and when Russia were to take definite measures concerning the Narrows and their contiguous territory. Isvolsky frankly informed Neratoff what he had said, and made it a peg on which to hand a request for a sum of money; this, he said, was absolutely necessary in order to subsidise certain newspapers, and he deftly observed that Tittoni was much more liberally supplied with funds—by the Consulta—than he was. Isvolsky was not going to wait for Russia's formal approval of the Franco-German Treaty, and on that same 4th November he wrote to de Selves :

" Let me repeat my firm conviction that now, when France —Russia's friend and ally—is going to take up fresh and firm ground in the north of Africa, the French Government—to whom the Russian Government has given unswerving diplomatic support—is ready to recognise our complete liberty of action, both as regards the Narrows and Northern China, and no opposition will be offered to any steps we may think to take to safeguard our interests and consolidate our position."

A copy of this letter was sent to Neratoff, who telegraphed that Isvolsky had represented exactly the desires and intentions of the Russian Government. But de Selves, who had a lively recollection of Isvolsky's vagaries, and who was reminded of the Austrian attempt to strike a bargain, wanted to know precisely what Russia wanted to get. The approval of the Treaty was not to be clogged by other matters ; Sazonoff, who had been travelling in Europe, was expected in Paris early in December, and he would tell him at once that the two questions must be kept apart. Our Treaty was formally approved by Russia on the 2/15th November, and Isvolsky carried on conversations with Georges Louis, who was in Paris in temporary charge of the political department of the Foreign Office, whom Isvolsky

found more accessible, because less preoccupied, than de Selves, and with whom, although German propaganda notes have represented otherwise, he got on capitally. He writes to Neratoff :

" Although Louis is no favourite of yours, I am only too glad to find some one here with whom I can talk seriously ; "

and again :

" I have had two most interesting discussions with Louis, which have thrown considerable light on the French Ministerial attitude towards our desiderata. I gather from him that his people are a little nervous about the terms I used in the latter part of my letter ; Louis is a little worried by the indefiniteness of the 'freedom of action'. He would like to know precisely what we intend to do in the Narrows, and what solution of questions germane to this we hope for. I told him the expression was used by me on account of its flexibility, and it is impossible for the moment to foresee what turn the question of the Narrows will take. Russia, I said, is all for preserving the Turkish rule, but on condition that we are free from restrictions which are out of date and are a slur on our dignity ; that is why we are especially wishful to come to a friendly understanding with Turkey in this matter. But if such an understanding is unrealisable, or if the Turkish Power in Europe were to be dissolved, we should view the Narrows from a different angle. Just as France declared this summer that she could not admit the establishment of a foreign Power in Morocco, so we are obliged, for our part, to warn her that we could not allow the passage of the Narrows to vest in other than Russian hands. As far as one could see, this explanation produced the desired effect. Louis quite agreed that it would be well to begin by making quite clear the attitude of our two Governments in face of what might turn up either in the Far or in the Near East. He agreed also that I had chosen the best way of starting an exchange of views, nor did he seem to see any objection to our possibly entering into certain engagements secretly."

Isvolsky may or may not have sent to St. Petersburg an exact account of his conversation with Louis, but he was obviously pleased with him, as with himself. A month later he writes to Sazonoff that it has been decided to set up a post of Secretary-General to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that Louis has declined the office, and is leaving

for Russia. The Caillaux Cabinet, he thought, felt itself "the caliph of an hour", and was afraid of making a definite secret agreement which might be used as a weapon against Caillaux. Isvolsky's letters absolutely preclude any idea that it was the writer who inspired the subsequent recall of Louis, with whom he seems to have had no sort of dispute. De Selves' reply was in Isvolsky's hands on 4th January, and the latter could say that it formally confirmed the hope held out by the French Government regarding the Narrows, and that it suggested the feasibility of settling the question in all its details. Isvolsky on this occasion had not been difficult to please, for de Selves had worded his letter very cautiously; he simply reaffirmed the statement put out in 1908 as to falling in with the wishes of Russia respecting the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, and he expressed willingness to proceed to an "exchange of views" should new conditions render it necessary to examine the subject. De Selves' letter had been revised by Philippe Berthelot, then Sub-Director of Asiatic Affairs, and a note had been added as to another "exchange of views" in respect of affairs in China. We were committed to nothing in the stereotyped "exchange of views", no new conditions affecting the Dardanelles arose to require it, nor did Isvolsky broach the point to me when I took office, though he gave me no peace concerning a financial syndicate to assist China. In his letter of 4th January de Selves had said to him:

"Your Excellency will remember that the Government of the Republic has constantly shown its intention to support Russia in the defence of her interests in Manchuria, and has lately given proof of this in refusing admission for a Chinese loan of 150 millions, while Article 16 of the Manchurian contract would not have been suppressed or remodelled but for Russia's wishes."

He added that the support of the French Government was extended to Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan, and that the consistency of French policy was in itself a guarantee of its being continuous where Russia's interests were at stake. Isvolsky was quite satisfied with the Bourse

restrictions, but a new difficulty arose in the shape of a large financial combination, composed of English, French, German and American banking houses, which had been formed to assist in floating Chinese loans in return for industrial advantages. Sazonoff, when in Paris in December 1911, complained to de Selves of French banks participating in an international consortium to deal with Chinese affairs, which left Russia out in the cold, especially at a moment when France was giving recognition to Russia's Asiatic interests. De Selves pleasantly suggested that Russia should step in also, which Sazonoff pronounced to be impracticable, and the Minister of Finance sent the Director of the Russo-Asiatic Bank to explain to French financiers that Russia could not possibly subscribe to the syndicate. It was then suggested that France should back out from the Company, and as neither the Banque de l'Indo-Chine nor the Comptoir National d'Escompte would hear of this retrograde step, Isvolsky repaired to Caillaux, in whom he thought to see the shadow behind the great syndicate. Personally I could see no reason either to leave to foreign houses a free field in China, or to try and dissolve the syndicate simply to please Russia, and with the expert help of Philippe Berthelot I managed to appease both Russia and the banking combination.

In May, after an unsuccessful attack by Italy, Turkey closed the Dardanelles, which provoked a protest from Russia. Turkey, she said, must permit the passage of neutral ships in war as in peace. France, in line with other countries, asked the Porte to re-open the Straits for everybody's benefit, and I pressed this on Rifaat Pasha in Paris, and begged Bompard to be equally insistent in Constantinople. I told Isvolsky candidly that the Russian theory was not justifiable, and I suggested to him that from his own angle it was scarcely logical. I reminded him that the Straits, unlike the Suez Canal, were not under an international régime, and that what he claimed was a sort of neutralisation, the precise opposite of what Russia had in the back of her mind for herself. I was careful to avoid any word which could be construed into approval of

what Russia might hereafter seek to do, but Isvolsky tumbled to my hint, and wrote to Sazonoff :

" Poincaré has roughly outlined the idea to which I wish to draw your attention. If Turkey is obliged to open the Straits to neutral commerce in peace as in war, there will come a formal neutralisation of the Straits. We must not lose sight of the fact that this may one day conflict with our own political interests and aspirations."

A few days later came the question of intervening between Turkey and Italy, to prevent further—and wholly unnecessary—bloodshed. Sazonoff was opposed to a conference, and Isvolsky had to offer a rather lame reason that at this conference other matters might be brought up, and it would look as if Russia were going to seize the opportunity of bringing the Straits into the discussion, and in her favour. Paul Cambon, who was in Paris at the time, told him that the conference must of course discuss the Balkans generally. " Russia and England ", he said, " must avoid any appearance of opposing one another on the question of the Straits, where Russia should be favoured ; this is the only way to restore the equilibrium of strength in the Mediterranean, which the Tripoli war has overset in favour of Italy, and Italy means the Triple Alliance." It was obvious that if the British, French and Russian fleets were denied a passage through the Straits in time of war, every sort of complication would arise, but my own opinion was that it would be wiser for the actual conference to confine itself to the purpose for which it was convened ; I told Isvolsky that later, under conditions acceptable to Sir Edward Grey, we should do our best to help his country, but that agreement with England was a *sine qua non.* The question of the Straits did not crop up, since no conference met in reference to the Tripoli war, but during the Balkan crisis Sazonoff wrote to Isvolsky, 19/28 November 1912,[1] that Russia still clung to her freedom of action, and she must be apprised as to how the Great Powers are disposed towards her. Sazonoff added : " Each of them has given at various times a conditional assent ". It was probably the leaning of the

[1] Siebert, p. 687.

French Government which Sazonoff wished to learn, but the Ambassador prudently refrained from tackling me again as to the Straits up to the month of November 1912. He knew my plain answer would have been that agreement with England was the main condition, and Sazonoff knew better than any one what were Sir Edward Grey's conditions and reservations, as the British Foreign Minister had admirably clarified these in a letter of October 1908. I was adamant in my refusal to discuss with Isvolsky what we should do in the event of the fall of the Ottoman Empire, as I had no thought of encouraging Russia in any wish, let alone any plan, to dismember Turkey; Isvolsky was fully aware of this, and that I set my face like a flint against not only a discussion, but against any official study of a hypothetical situation which might be dangerous and would anyhow be premature.

CHAPTER XII

The Hamburg Tracts—Misunderstanding between M. Sazonoff and Georges Louis—Closure of incident.

DESPITE many assertions there is no letter or telegram or reliable evidence to show that there was the slightest disagreement between Georges Louis and the Government with regard to the Narrows. If a sense of discipline kept him from coming straight to me there were old chiefs in the Cabinet such as Léon Bourgeois,[1] Briand, and Delcassé, to whom he could have gone for advice; if he disagreed with my policy the least he could have done would have been to communicate with those who could have given me pause. He did nothing of the kind, and the Yellow Book published in 1922 disposes of the lucubrations of Judet, who meanwhile, under Clemenceau's Ministry, had been brought to book and punished.

The Ambassador little thought that one day his name would be quoted by the bitter opponent of the rapprochement between England and Russia which Louis as a good Frenchman could not but heartily approve. He had little love for Russian statesmen who disfavoured this policy, and when, on 5th April, he told me of the rumour that Sazonoff was to be replaced by M. Witte—which he would not believe—he said: "In any case we cannot want M. Witte back in power; all his time would be taken up in managing Berlin, and it would probably be the end of the Triple Entente. His main

[1] "Georges Louis, with whom personally I was on excellent terms, never said or wrote a word to me as to having any sort of disagreement with you as to our policy, and your Government, to my knowledge, never had any difference of opinion with him" (Léon Bourgeois to myself, 7th November 1924).

idea has been that France and Russia have made a great mistake in entering into close relations with England."

Unfortunately, if things went well between myself and Louis they were less satisfactory between our Ambassador and Sazonoff.

Louis was a hard worker and an excellent writer of despatches ; he had all the qualities of a first-rate Director, or of a Secretary-General, but not the social qualifications which adorn an Ambassador. He lived as a bachelor in his Embassy and took no trouble to entertain, while his delicate health was affected by the cold and fogs of the Neva. He was often ill-informed of what passed around him. The interview between Emperor and Czar at Potsdam and the Russo-German Agreement in Eastern affairs took him by surprise. Isvolsky pretended that having been reprimanded on this occasion he began to colour his *communiqués*. This is not my impression, but there was always a regrettable lack of contact between Sazonoff and himself, and an incompatibility of temperament which gave rise to a series of misunderstandings. Sazonoff murmured that the Ambassador did not accurately transmit to Paris what was told him at St. Petersburg. This idea seems to have arisen from French telegrams deciphered from the Pont de Chantres, nor did the versions given by Sazonoff himself to Isvolsky of his communications with Louis always agree with the accounts given by the latter. Isvolsky took advantage of these incidents to demand that his chief should communicate with me through him instead of through the French Ambassador, a proposal which he took good care not to make to me, and which of course I should have declined.

At the beginning of April Sazonoff wrote a letter to Isvolsky which neither the Black Book nor Stieve have reproduced, and which we only know by the reply :

" I see by your letter that you are more and more dissatisfied with Georges Louis's manner of transmitting communications. It seems to me that your dissatisfaction is well founded, and my opinion is that the existing means of communicating with the French Government are fatally liable to serious inconvenience and misunderstanding." [He stuck to his idea of having com-

munications passed through him.] " I shall use every effort to get M. Poincaré to replace him, but the recall of an Ambassador is a very difficult and complex question, above all here, where every nomination of such importance is a matter of political intrigue."

The Ambassador continued:

"You remember the trouble it took to get rid of M. Bompard, against whom we had more grievances than against Louis.[1] The more important the diplomatic post the less chance that it will fall to a professional diplomat, and the more probable the nomination of a bureaucrat of the Louis type, or of a politician. It seems to me, therefore, wiser not to press the affair."

It is thus a travesty of facts to speak of a personal intrigue by Isvolsky against Georges Louis.

The Russian Ambassador's reply shows how far I was from blindly following either the Russian Government or Isvolsky. On orders from Sazonoff, Isvolsky came to tell me " in strict confidence " that Serbia and Bulgaria had concluded two secret treaties a few days ago. He explained that by the first of these treaties the two Balkan States agreed to render mutual assistance and to maintain the *status quo* in the Balkans. By the second they agreed to do nothing without advice from Russia. Louis knew nothing of this until on 1st April[2] I telegraphed to him:

" I have expressed some surprise to M. Isvolsky that the Bulgarian Government should not have informed us directly of the new trend in their policy. . . . I asked him [M. Isvolsky] if the engagement relative to the *status quo* bears no subsidiary engagement for the case of the *status quo* being broken. You will appreciate as I do that the confidence made by M. Isvolsky, seen in the light of the *questionnaire* submitted to you by M. Sazonoff, 14th February, reveals a situation demanding all our vigilance."

My telegram was deciphered in St. Petersburg, and Sazonoff, stung by my having passed on his confidence to Louis, expressed " extraordinary surprise " to Isvolsky and declared outright that if I committed such indiscretions they

[1] Isvolsky's statement is incorrect. Bompard did his duty as Ambassador but was removed from his post owing to complaints by the Russian Government.

[2] Yellow Book, No. 22, p. 14.

would be much embarrassed in future in communicating with me. This telegram from Sazonoff does not appear in the Black Book but has been published by Stieve[1] and shows that I kept Louis *au courant* with the secret moves of diplomacy.

Some weeks passed. A letter came from Sazonoff which neither the Bolshevists nor their French and German translators have published, but which, according to a despatch from Isvolsky,[2] contained this phrase: "My patience is at an end". It was always Sazonoff who complained.

"You know," wrote the Ambassador to his minister, "from the very first I considered this question as thorny and very difficult and long hesitated to speak to M. Poincaré. I only decided after receiving your letter, in which you said, 'Your patience was at an end'. I have very cautiously put out feelers. I began speaking as if in my own name, touching upon nominations expected in high diplomatic French posts, and calling his attention to certain outward defects of Louis. This did not produce the desired effect, and fearing that the proposed changes would not affect St. Petersburg, I took heart and told him in a very confidential fashion of the coolness and misunderstandings between yourself and Louis. I did not press him, and did not demand the Ambassador's recall, but indicated to him that in the interests of Franco-Russian relations it would be desirable sooner or later to replace him, preferably by a diplomat."

Thus Isvolsky failed to obtain the desired impression, and to urge me on he was obliged to admit that there was coolness between Sazonoff and Louis.

"Unfortunately," he continued, "here again was shown Poincaré's brutally straightforward spirit, completely ignoring diplomatic form and procedure. Instead of keeping the thing dark and quietly waiting for a favourable moment to replace Louis, he informed all his colleagues in the Council of Ministers, and advised G. Louis himself."

Isvolsky made up his mind to please Sazonoff by requesting that Louis should be replaced, but no one was to know he had done this. I was certainly too brutally candid to lend myself to the proposed manœuvre, and I was not

[1] Vol. ii. p. 248. Tel. 24th March/6th April 1912.
[2] 4th/17th May 1912. Stieve, vol. ii. p. 113.

going to put a rope round Louis's throat in the dark. When I knew that Isvolsky spoke in Sazonoff's name and invoked the interest of the Alliance, I thought it right to inform the French Cabinet. I told Isvolsky what I was doing, and he could say nothing to dissuade me. I made no complaint of Louis to the Council of Ministers, but I informed the Government that Isvolsky had come on behalf of Sazonoff to inform me of "coolness and misunderstandings" which could, he asserted, be prejudicial to the relations of the two countries.

Isvolsky pretended to have spoken in strict confidence, but he only made his insinuations more and more clear, until I had to inform my colleagues. They were as dissatisfied as myself by the evidently faulty liaison between Paris and St. Petersburg, more especially Steeg, Lebrun, Klotz and Delcassé, who remembered what happened in 1911.

I had already been strongly advised to return a visit which Sazonoff had made to Paris in 1911, and to try and bring things into better tune. M. Fallières approved of this idea, as something had to be done quickly: better to lance the abscess at once. Whatever Louis's merits, they were worthless unless appreciated by the allied Governments. On 7th May, at a Council of Ministers, at Rambouillet, I was authorised to ask him to put his Embassy at our disposal, and I was to submit the name of M. Paul Deschanel, who was not yet President of the Chamber, to follow him. It was impossible to displace one of our great Ambassadors, such as Barrère, Paul and Jules Cambon, but St. Petersburg was no post for a beginner, and, to fill it, one had to find a man of real authority.

After consultation with Paléologue I sent a telegram in his name to Louis, 8th May 1912, 11 A.M., informing him of the representations made by Isvolsky and of the decision of the Council of Ministers. Louis replied, after some delay, requesting permission to come to Paris; Isvolsky's assertions, he said, were unfounded. I asked the latter point blank if he were speaking on behalf of Sazonoff, and as he declared it was so I decided to leave things over until Louis had come to Paris, but unfortunately

the matter leaked out into the Press. However, Louis's oral explanations suggested that Isvolsky might be at the bottom of the whole thing, as I knew nothing then of letters and telegrams which later came to our hands. The Ambassador had permission to return to his post, whence he wrote me confidentially on the 25th May that Sazonoff accused him of being ill-disposed towards him, and of having spread false reports in Paris as to his designs. The Minister harped rather confusedly on letters and telegrams addressed to Paris the preceding year about the Kharikia Railway, but the root of the trouble appears to have been misunderstandings with regard to M. Kokovtzoff and the Chinese loan, and telegrams sent to us had evidently been deciphered by the Russian Foreign Office.

Louis apparently succeeded in convincing Sazonoff that the misunderstandings were due to clerical errors in translation. Two things still worried me; I did not want the trouble to reach the Emperor's ears, but if Sazonoff had already spoken of it to his Sovereign, I felt that our Ambassador must try to efface any unfavourable impression; also Louis's letter had shown a lack of unity among Russian authorities which was very disquieting.

With some difficulty I persuaded Louis to ask for a special audience; this was granted for 10th August, when the Emperor was explicit in his assurances that he had known nothing of the representations made by his Foreign Minister. On all other points the Czar was all that was gracious, and the Press, both in France and Russia, gave full publicity and a very pleasant flavour to the occasion.

Later on, rumours attributed Isvolsky's manœuvre to the Grand Duchess Wladimir,[1] among others, but I was able to assure myself, through the Grand Duke Nicholas Michael Michelovitch,[2] that Sazonoff had been the prime

[1] The Grand Duchess Wladimir—the favourite daughter-in-law of the Emperor Alexander—was born a Princess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. Louis believed she was very anxious that the Marquis de Breteuil should be appointed Ambassador to St. Petersburg.

[2] The Grand Duke—a member of the Institut de France—was very intimate with Gabriel Hanotaux. At a dinner—*à trois*—in the latter's house, the Grand Duke, who had made inquiries in Russia, told me that Isvolsky had done just what Sazonoff told him.

mover. But even to this day the truth about a very disagreeable incident has not come to light.

Happily, no sort of ill-feeling existed between Louis and myself. As soon as he heard I was coming to Russia he warmly pressed me to stay at the Embassy, and although I should personally have preferred to go to a hotel, the rumours circulating about him rendered it well for me to give him all the official countenance I could.

CHAPTER XIII

Visit of the Queen of Holland—Italo-Turkish War spreads to the Ægean—Crisis in Turkey—Rising in the Balkans—Conversation between Louis and Sazonoff—Efforts of France to maintain *status quo*.

THE European sky continued to be clouded over with only very fitful intervals of rather pale sunshine. Now and again domestic affairs claimed our attention, but for the most part foreign policy absorbed us, heart and mind. There was of course the usual round of official functions, chief of which was the "return" visit of the Queen of Holland and her Consort, the Prince of the Netherlands. The rich resources of the *garde meuble* had been drawn on for their state apartment in the Quai d'Orsay, a dinner on the night of their arrival at the Élysée had been followed by a breakfast at the Legation the next morning, after which the Queen—who had gracefully alluded to the French blood in her veins—proceeded to lay a wreath at the foot of the statue of Coligny. The banquet that evening at the Foreign Office was not confined to statesmen and Government officials; acting on a hint from the venerable and always delightful Chevalier de Stuers, some authors and eminent artists had been invited, and for each of them the Queen seemed to have just the right word. The review at Satory and the subsequent breakfast at Versailles were somewhat spoilt by the weather, but the whole occasion was a great success, and I was able to have some useful talk with the Netherlands Minister, Jonkheer de Marees Van Zwinderen.

This little festivity over, we went back to our cares in Tripoli and the Near East. In January, Italy, irritated by the slow drift of the war, had decided on taking action in the Ægean Sea, and on 24th February two Italian warships

had fired on the port of Beyrouth, where a Turkish torpedo-boat was lurking. The Ottoman Bank and the railway offices were struck by shells, and we had to send a cruiser to protect our own people.

In Libya one fierce—and fruitless—fight succeeded another, and on the 18th April the Italian fleet made a noisy demonstration at the entrance to the Dardanelles, and knocked the forts about. The Porte promptly told the Powers that trading ships could not use the Straits, and Turkish vessels shut the door completely by mining the passages. The neutrals were all very angry, but in Italy the Dardanelles operation was only regarded as a prelude to much more formidable action in the Ægean Sea. "The symphony", said a well-known Italian politician just then, "has begun with an adagio; now for the crescendo."

On the 25th April Italian troops disembarked in the island of Stampalia; on the 4th May General Ameglio and Admiral Viale took over Rhodes, and the Italian flag was run up over the town. The other islands—Kalymnos, Néros, Patmos, Simi, Cos—had the same fate. The Italians wanted to dump themselves down everywhere, while the Greeks, very much upset by these military shows, urged the restoration of their former privileges and of the large measure of autonomy which they had enjoyed before the institution of vilayets. On another side the fighting went on in Libya at Zanzour and Khoms, at Sidi-Ali and Sidi-Said, but nowhere with any decisive result. Turkey in Europe was now being worked up, not only by growing unrest in Albania and Macedonia, but by Parliamentary troubles and crises in the Government. The régime of the Young Turks was threatened, and Kiderlen told M. Guéchoff,[1] the Bulgarian Prime Minister, that he thought their day was over. The revolution which had been brought about by the enthusiastic Ottomans, most of whom had received a European education, was due to the recklessness of the ancient system, but under a veneer of Liberalism the new Government had carried on in the same arbitrary and heavy-handed way. There was perhaps some improvement

[1] Guéchoff, *L'Alliance balkanique*.

in the army and navy, but the abuses of civil administration were even worse than before. When Italy challenged Turkey with regard to Tripoli, Hakki Pasha had been for two years Grand Vizier, and the Cabinet, dominated by the Young Turks, was said to be equally lacking in vision and political courage.[1] Anyhow, as the war dragged on, events tumbled over one another; the Ottoman Chamber was dissolved; Said Pasha could not make up his mind as to peace terms; the War Minister could not prevent the officers from dabbling in politics, the Adrianople garrison mutinied, Albania revolted, Mahmoud Chevket was turned out, the Ministry fell; there was every sign of a Turkish break-up as well as break-down. The old Marshal Moukhtar Pasha, President of the Senate, was asked to form a Cabinet and get out of a bad mess as well as he could; "the condition of the Ottoman Empire", so the Roumanian Prime Minister told Guéchoff, "is desperate and not far from a cataclysm". The conditions in which Turkey was represented to be were not likely to calm the Balkan States. One would have thought that Turkey would anyhow have tried to end the war, but she seemed to fear that if she yielded up the sovereignty which Italy claimed in Libya, she would create a precedent to the benefit of the Balkans. European diplomacy revolved in a vicious circle. No one of the Great Powers had really a free hand. Russia, tied to Italy by the Racconigi Agreement, would have liked to help her, but was in some degree paralysed because she could not give up her hopes as to the Narrows, nor prick the festering question of the Near East. England would also have been happy to render good service to Italy, but she could not risk disgruntling—at the very gates of India—the Mussulman world. Austria, Italy's official ally, had no particular love for her, and perhaps chuckled to see her engaged in a thankless trial of strength. Italy's other ally, Germany, whom she really liked better, had her own good reasons for keeping in with the Young Turks. France for the last ten years had promised Italy full scope, but she, like England, was a great Mussulman nation, with her Oriental

[1] Général M. Moukhtar Pasha, *La Turquie, l'Allemagne et l'Europe.*

policy based on the integrity of the Ottoman Empire; moreover, she could not be sure that if she interposed between the combatants she would succeed in separating them.

From the beginning of the war Europe had looked on, and when the guns fired at Preveza, the Marquis de San Giuliano soothed the Powers by a promise not to upset the *status quo* in the Balkans; on the 30th September, when the Sublime Porte approached the Powers they shook their heads politely but quite unmistakably.

Neither the Black Book nor Stieve have suggested how Sazonoff could have thought of a Franco-German intervention at the end of 1911, nor how this could have been exercised without first being approved by the Powers, nor what chance it would have had of doing good. When I told Tittoni how more than anxious we were that the war should end, he merely replied: "Turkey must accept our decree of annexation". When I said the same thing to Rifaat Pasha, he replied that Turkey could only accept mediation if Italy did not insist on her recognising this decree. A few days afterwards Rifaat brought the Turkish Senator, Boustani, the President of an Inter-Parliamentary Arbitration, to me: "We long for peace," he declared, "but we will not and we cannot sign except on conditions that the Turkish sovereignty is maintained, or, worst come to the worst, the *status quo* should be strictly observed; that is to say, the Italian occupation of Tripoli only without Cyrenaica or the Tripoli hinterland." Rifaat himself was equally explicit, and no less effusive, on the same point.

Sazonoff was, however, so perturbed by the duration of the war that he suggested the Powers should address themselves to Rome and Constantinople and ask the two belligerent Governments what was the least they would take to sign peace. Berlin accepted the idea; London did not like it. I told Isvolsky, when he brought me the note from Sazonoff, that Italy's reply would certainly contain conditions which Turkey would refuse:

"In your sympathy with Italy you will still urge a concerted appeal to Constantinople; Germany will not join in, and nothing

will come. We must find some formula which will enable Germany to remain with us and to help us to discover some means of reconciling what the Porte and what Italy demand as a minimum." [1]

Just when I was having this talk with Isvolsky—which, by the way, testified to my wish to remain on good terms with Germany—a Paris sheet announced that France, favouring Italy, was going to bring pressure to bear on the Porte, which, of course, would have been a violation of neutrality. I thought it right to define at once the position of the French Government, and the Agence Havas issued a note :

" Some newspapers have stated that the French Government, together with the other two Powers of the Triple Entente, are disposed—if the German and Austrian Governments agree—to appeal energetically to the Porte in order to obtain the withdrawal of Ottoman troops from Tripoli and the cessation of hostilities. We are in a position to say that the Government of the Republic is ready to associate itself in any concerted action of all the Powers addressing itself to either of the belligerents so as to find some basis on which to mediate for peace." [2]

Berlin and Vienna were just as punctilious as we were as to observing strict neutrality, and they also thought any attempt at mediation premature so long as the Italian and Turkish points of view remained as the poles apart. On the 29th of February the *Neue Freie Presse* said nothing could be done until there was some change in the tempers of the opponents, and the German Press mocked at the Russian proposal. However, the question laid down by Sazonoff was presented at Rome by all the Powers, though they entertained no illusions ; and they were not surprised by Italy's reply on the 16th March that she could not compound in any way in the matter of her full sovereignty in Libya, that she must insist on the entire withdrawal of Turkish troops from Tripoli and Cyrenaica, and that as to the religious rites of the Khalifa she would agree to the same terms as were laid down after the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

[1] Letter of Isvolsky, 15/28th February 1912.
[2] Agence Havas, 27th February 1912.

I then insisted that, in order that Constantinople should be addressed in the same friendly spirit as at Rome, all the Powers should be represented. Accordingly, on the 16th April, all the Ambassadors called on Assim Bey, the Foreign Minister, who had his reply ready: "We cannot consent to start negotiations unless Italy will withdraw the decree of annexation." Two days later the Dardanelles were bombarded by the Italian fleet, and the Turkish Government closed the Narrows. Sazonoff would not follow Sir Edward Grey's suggestion as to advising Italy not to make this naval demonstration, and on the 20th of April—with Racconigi in his mind—he told the Duma that Italy was carrying on the war with every consideration for the neutrals and very generously as regards Turkey, and that the bombardment of the Dardanelles was quite within her right. Of course Italy, having declared war, was legally entitled to assault the Narrows, just as Turkey was technically right to shut them; but the blowing up and the closing down made the whole European situation far more difficult, and not only Sazonoff but the British Government urged that the Narrows should be reopened at the earliest possible moment.

Bompard at once impressed on the Turkish Government the importance of letting trading vessels use the passage, and I said the same thing to Rifaat. On 3rd May the Porte announced that she would reopen the channel, but her calculated dawdling over picking up the mines was a strong irritant to European opinion. The Powers now lay on their oars, but did not discontinue their parleying. Bompard reminded Said Pasha that the occupation of the Sporades ought to be taken seriously by Turkey; "there will be complications one after another," he said, "from which you will suck no advantage: the Ottoman Empire should beware lest one international problem awkwardly follows on the heels of the last; let me advise you, as a friend, that it is high time to think of peace". Said Pasha "thought" of peace, but *à l'Orientale* drifted on.

To obviate a bunch of questions arising at once was a daily care. France, Russia and England had thought of a

conference, and I had suggested the draft of a preliminary programme. Rifaat at first rather negatived the idea, but he then asked me if the conference could be restricted to the war, and I told him yes.[1]

At the end of the month Bompard telegraphed to me that Turkey would only say yes to a conference if, as a preliminary, the restitution of Cyrenaica were certified and if Italy would be satisfied with a civil Protectorate in Tripoli; we were indeed far from a settlement.

In the hope of reassuring Turkey and leading her to the green table I proposed that the neutral Powers should first of all put on record their individual disinterestedness. My suggestion only made Sazonoff look more and more askance at the conference. Twice, and especially on the 3rd of June, Louis told me dubiously that Russia might be indisposed for a conference of European Powers; she might prefer, with an eye on future possibilities, to keep her hands quite free. This attitude he attributed to Isvolsky; he was wrong, for the Stieve papers and the letters which Réné Marchand selected to put in the Black Book showed that the opposition came from Sazonoff in the name of the Russian Government. On the 6th of June Louis thought that Sazonoff had come up into line with us, but a week later the Minister definitely opposed the "disinterestedness" formula which I had fixed up with England. Louis, who thought himself persecuted by Isvolsky, persisted in charging him with every little thing which ran counter to us—those "little things" which were just the price, and not an excessive one, we had to pay for the friendship with Russia which Sazonoff would have been the last to try and dissolve. Sazonoff at first pleaded against my formula that it might annoy Germany and Austria,[2] but this would not quite hold water, and he soon frankly admitted that he himself was the stumbling-block.[3] Isvolsky did everything to pare down the objections offered by his chief, and the letter in which

[1] Tittoni thought that the only way out was an *équivoque*; by this he meant a *combinazione*, but he had no idea of how to bring about a *combinazione*, and if Tittoni could not do it no one else could.

[2] Telegram, Sazonoff, 31st May/13th June 1912.

[3] Telegram, Sazonoff, 5th/18th June 1912.

he spoke of the storm in my room on the 19th of June shows that he had only made quite innocent remarks to me and had quite frankly told his Minister how much I resented the refusal from St. Petersburg.[1] All this correspondence points to the faith we pinned to the information and opinion of our Ambassador, and it was on the receipt of his letters of the 4th and 5th June, in which he dwelt on Sazonoff's objections, that I gave Isvolsky a bit of my mind. In order to put a term to what looked like interminable negotiations, I sent Louis on the 17th June the draft which England had readily approved, and asked him to try and get Sazonoff to agree to something like what Sir Edward Grey accepted. The wording was to the effect that the Governments of France, Russia and England were in accord as to the conditions under which—at a given moment—they could move towards making peace between Italy and Turkey; these Powers believing, however, that friendly intervention could only succeed if strictly confined to the point at issue. "The Powers, therefore," the draft continued, "who are to mediate should start by putting in writing their total disinterestedness, and Russia, France and England think that to secure their main object the five Powers should confer before making a concerted move."[2] On the 10th/23rd June, Sazonoff, with his face always set like a flint against the "disinterestedness" clause, telegraphed to Isvolsky a proposal to substitute for it that the "Powers having only in view the general interests of Europe, and animated only by the desire to restore peace, should declare themselves prepared for friendly intervention, of which the only object is to decide the question which provoked the struggle". Louis hoped I should accept this, which I did; the "disinterested" clause regrettably disappeared, but, on the other hand, the field of intervention was to be closely fenced in—an essentially necessary precaution if the *status quo* were to be maintained.

But when were we going to intervene? We waited; but no favourable moment in the fight seemed to occur, when

[1] Letter from Isvolsky, 24th May/6th June. Black Book, i. p. 270.
[2] Telegram, Isvolsky, 4th/17th June 1912. Black Book, i. p. 292.

in July the story got about [1] that the belligerents were in direct communication as to the terms of peace. The first echo of these conversations, the report of serious disorders in Albania, and the fog which still overhung the main lines of Balkan policy, combined to switch our attention off Tripoli and on to the peninsula where the big storm seemed to be brewing.

On taking office I had found a telegram in which our Chargé d'Affaires at Belgrade told de Selves that there was much ado in Serbia [2] as to what might happen in the spring in the Balkans, and, that whatever the Austrians might say to the contrary, the number of Austrian soldiers in Bosnia-Herzegovina had been substantially increased.[3]

Isvolsky, in one of his first interviews with me, had expressed his "ardent desire" that Russia and France should keep a tight hand in view of possible serious complications in the Near East; I heartily concurred, and I now hinted to Louis that here was the opportunity to ascertain Russian views on the Eastern situation in all its complexities, and that the first thing he should elicit from Sazonoff was whether the Russian Government had surrendered any of its full liberty in respect to the Near East.[4] I asked Paul Cambon to let Sir Edward Grey know what I had done,[5] and on the 30th January Louis informed me that Sazonoff had beamed over my reply, and had said how glad he would be to draw England into our counsels. Sazonoff added that Germany's selfish policy hindered for the moment any effective mediation between Italy and Turkey, and that we must keep a sharp eye on Macedonia, where the komitadjes were increasing, and increasingly troublesome, and liable to

[1] Telegram from St. Petersburg to the *Times*, 15th July.

[2] Jules Cambon wrote a note to the same effect on the 17th January, and added that the Chargé d'Affaires thought that the old Emperor alone stood in the way of Austria taking action, and that she was getting ready to invade the Sandjak.

[3] Yellow Book, Balkan Affairs, vol. i. No. 1.

[4] Yellow Book, Balkan Affairs, No. 3. Telegram, 27th January. As my colleagues and I a little mistrusted Isvolsky I preferred that this conversation should take place at St. Petersburg between Louis and Sazonoff.

[5] Yellow Book, No. 4, 28th January.

provoke ugly bloodshed. Ferdinand and his Government—he thought—were not the instigators of these nefarious activities, but they could put a spoke in the wheel if they liked, and the Powers ought to insist on Bulgaria doing her duty. In answer to a query Sazonoff told Louis that public opinion in St. Petersburg would be behind him. "We want peace, and we are no longer in 1876: the day of Pan-Slavist Committees is over, but it is not Sofia only we have to watch. The Turks must also make their régime more tolerable, and we must go into the matter of the necessary reforms in the Turkish sphere of influence in the Balkans." Louis, who had no more news than we had as to what—in collaboration with Russian agents—was going on, both at Sofia and Belgrade, told me on the 1st February that the day before Sazonoff had said to him rather anxiously:[1] "When France and Russia, and I hope England also, shall have confabulated, they should at once give their views to Germany so that she cannot pretend to have been ignored. Whatever we do, however, we cannot shut our eyes to the probability of Germany, in her indifference to European interests, continuing to shun any general entente and of Austria following suit." Perhaps Sazonoff made a wrong cast in putting Austria second, or in thinking that she would follow rather than lead Germany. Anyhow, in spite of the ill-will which he feared, he plumped for a European entente, subject to falling back, if need be, on partial agreements. The danger, he was sure, lay in the Balkans; it was already visible in Macedonia; it would soon be found in Albania; it was high time to do something, if a general flare-up were to be prevented. Neither here nor in a former talk did Sazonoff allude to the Balkan pourparlers, which were just on the point of becoming operative. He did not tell us that Russia had a stronger lever than we had in respect of Ferdinand, who wanted to borrow three million francs for himself.[2] But he seemed so perturbed that I felt I must inform London as to the purport of our conversation. Paul Cambon saw

[1] Yellow Book, No. 6.

[2] The loan was asked 12th/25th November 1911. It was not given till July 1912.

Sir Arthur Nicolson, who thought that a new intervention at Sofia, where the Powers were always advising measures of prudence, would be useless, as also would be the elaboration of a new programme of reforms in Macedonia. The Foreign Office Secretary also remarked that it was no use starting any questions without Austria, who would set her foot on anything said or done without her assent, and that England must not engage in what might be an otiose conversation; it was for Austria and Russia to make a beginning. Sir Edward Grey was not quite so negative; he would not decline to approach the Russian Government in reference to Sazonoff's last output, but he thought that no intervention in the Balkans could be wholly restricted to the Triple Entente. "At a given moment it would rest with us to secure a general agreement." This was pretty much what Sazonoff, like ourselves, thought, only the Russian was urgent and the Englishman less so.[1]

The papers just then were full of the fête at Sofia in honour of the coming-of-age of Prince Boris: here had gathered the heirs-apparent to the Balkan thrones and here the *Diadogue* Constantine had been the observed of observers. Ferdinand, who wanted to obtain money from Russia, but was also just starting to salute the Triple Alliance in Vienna and Berlin, was full of importance as leader of the Balkan policy, but we knew nothing of the transactions on which for some weeks Guéchoff—with his Sovereign's consent—had been engaged. At St. Petersburg Sazonoff was now saying to Louis that for the moment he wanted our discussion to be confined to ourselves; England could be introduced a little later, and finally the five Powers would deal with all matters affecting a general agreement. I disliked leaving England out even for a moment, but Louis thought, as there was no question of actually doing anything, it was no use merely to report daily conversations. It was not even for us to press the Russian Government; it

[1] Sir Francis Bertie just now told me of his fears as to what would be the European situation in the spring, and he thought that England and France, whose mutual friendship was indispensable, should take immediate counsel together. (Yellow Book, No. 9.)

was for them to open the ball, and they might be a little embarrassed by a third partner, even if the third partner were England.

It was therefore not an immediate matter of negotiation, but merely of what Louis called academic [1] conversations, to which he thought we might anyhow listen. But on Feb. 14th, Sazonoff, instead of opening his mouth, as Louis hoped, put up a sort of half *questionnaire*, half programme on the lines that we should agree as to what view we would take and what we might do in the case of: (*a*) an internal crisis in Turkey; (*b*) an active move on the part of Austria (Sanjak, Albania); (*c*) an armed struggle between Turkey and a Balkan Power (Montenegro, Greece, Bulgaria).

The practical questions to be studied were: (*a*) How far should we wait on events? (*b*) What moral means should we use to influence those directly concerned in the eventualities indicated? (*c*) What should we actually do to reinforce diplomacy?

Louis was right as to the seriousness of the questions Russia was putting to us, but he thought it better, as I did, that we should discuss them academically rather than take the chance of being suddenly dragged into action at Russia's heels, without time or breath to argue or make conditions. He agreed to give his first impressions of Sazonoff's proposals in a few days, and told him that he hoped to see me before the end of February, which the Russian Minister thought necessary. I replied to Louis accepting the necessity of keeping the conversation going, and that he should "draw the attention of our ally to the intense interest we take in maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman Empire".

Louis, looking very ill but very clear in his mind, came to Paris to talk things over with me. I had no notion of blindly following a lead from St. Petersburg, nor of allowing anything either to impair the integrity of the Ottoman Empire or to swell the heads of the Balkan States, and I told the Ambassador to be plain-spoken as to all this. We were quite agreeable to Turkish administrative reforms, but we did not appreciate Sazonoff's wish to handle such matters

[1] Yellow Book, No. 13.

without England. We should only have to go over all the ground again when Sir Edward Grey was brought in.

Hard upon this we heard via Tiflis and Constantinople of Russian military movements, which Isvolsky explained as purely local and justified by the manœuvres of the Turks, who were systematically occupying Persian territory and gaining a strategic position on the Russian flank.[1] I reminded him what our alliance imposed on us in the way of mutual consultation should any contingency not in the original treaty present itself. It was all very well for Sazonoff to tell Louis that the Imperial Government would do nothing in the Near East without warning us ; it was not enough to *warn* us, the prior matter was to concert with us.[2] There could be no possible doubt as to my standpoint. My despatches to Paul Cambon and Louis of the 13th and 14th March were precise as to what I said to Isvolsky, who faithfully conveyed my words : " France and Russia must ' concert ' action in event of conditions endangering peace, not merely ' warn ' one another of their mutual intentions ".[3] Isvolsky, a little taken aback by my remonstrance, could only say that Sazonoff would quite agree with us, and for this very reason had recently submitted a *questionnaire* to Louis and charged him (Isvolsky) to confer secretly with me. I was more than ready to go into the various questions raised, but I jibbed at the word " secretly ". The problems were too grave to be dealt with otherwise than by the Council of Ministers,[4] but I could then and there say that France held fast to her Eastern policy which spelt the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Balkans.

Isvolsky did not repeat this last phrase to Sazonoff, but I took care to repeat it in my letter to Louis, and as I wanted negotiations to be carried on between him and Sazonoff

[1] Black Book, t. 1. Letter from Isvolsky, 1st/14th March 1912.

[2] Black Book-Yellow Book, Nos. 16 and 17.

[3] That a precaution obviously taken by us against any possible Russian imprudence should have been twisted by imaginative chroniclers, German or others, into complaisance with the policy of St. Petersburg is remarkable ; one need only say that these fables have nothing to substantiate them.

[4] Yellow Book, Nos. 16 and 17.

rather than between myself and Isvolsky, I enumerated the "ifs" in the *quasi-questionnaire* as to which I wanted him to elicit information. Louis replied six days later that he had put my points to Sazonoff, and had reminded him of my request that England should be associated with us as soon as possible, and that no decision should be taken without reference to the Cabinet in London.[1]

On March 23rd Louis reported that he had again addressed Sazonoff as to the *questionnaire*, reminding him that for more than a month he had contributed no helpful word although he had himself insisted upon necessity of preliminary agreement between the two allies; Louis thought, however, that our representations had been so explicit that the question could now be considered as settled. The French Government had thus burnt into their ally a precaution engendered by our desire for peace, and which was not without appreciable value during the Balkan War.

[1] Yellow Book.

CHAPTER XIV

M. Isvolsky instructed to announce the Balkan Alliance to the French Government — Incomplete information — Early uneasiness — Application for Bulgarian loan—Conversations at St. Petersburg—What Russia did not say—Ferment in Bulgaria—Troubles in Albania.

WHETHER Sazonoff did not confide in our Ambassador, or whether the latter failed to read his thoughts, things did not go well. Louis wrote that the conversation issued in nothing definite, but Sazonoff asked him to resume it in a few days. It had not been resumed when the Russian Minister telegraphed to London and Paris[1] of the Serbo-Bulgarian Alliance. On April 1st Isvolsky, stiff and stern, monocle in eye, gave us this news. I tried without success to get details, and telegraphed to Sofia and Belgrade that our Ministers should discreetly put out feelers to confirm what we had heard. "It is important above all to know if the engagement relative to *status quo* has no subsidiary clause bearing upon Russia and in the event of the *status quo* being broken."[2] To Louis[3] I telegraphed that I had told Isvolsky of my surprise that the Bulgarian Government had given me no direct account of this development of its policy, particularly as I had recently notified them that no authorisation would be given to emit any loan in France unless Bulgaria adhered to the general policy of the Triple Entente.

The Bulgarian Government for some time had been trying to raise funds in Paris, but I had cautioned M. Stanciof, the Bulgarian Minister, that France was against any change in the *status quo* in the Balkans; that here she was in line with the Triple Entente; and that the Bourse would not be opened unless she undertook to pursue a peaceful policy.

[1] Siebert, pp. 153-54. [2] Yellow Book, No. 21.
[3] Yellow Book, No. 22.

The reply to this was so vague that I warned the great banking houses against the proposed loan, and later gave a hint in public why I had done so.

Louis replied (April 3rd) that the confidence made by Isvolsky emphasised the necessity of pressing the negotiations with Sazonoff on the *questionnaire* of 14th February; he was meeting Sazonoff on the following evening.[1]

On the 5th he reported that the Russian Minister[2] stated he had every reason to believe that neither in Paris nor Berlin was anything known of the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaties. He stressed the importance of keeping these secret; in the Russian Ministry itself only three officials were "in the know". Louis asked for some details as to the text of the new alliance and was told that there was nothing but a strictly defensive Agreement between the two States. The hypothetical aggressive Powers were not named, and the information proved to be very incomplete. Poor Louis seemed rather bewildered; Russia herself, according to Sazonoff, had undertaken no obligation. "What will you do", asked Louis, "in the case quoted in your 14th February *questionnaire*?" "That stands to reason," was the reply. "In event of a rupture of the *status quo*, or of active steps by Austria in Albania or in the Sanjak, or of any aggression by a Great Power against one of the small Balkan States, public opinion here would be roused, and we could not fold our arms. That is all that we can say now. Circumstances would largely dictate what we should do; but in any case we should confer with you before doing anything." Louis reminded him of our interpretation of the alliance; that the two allies must consult before taking any initiative other than in the Treaty. Sazonoff replied that there could be no misunderstanding as to this. "Happily," he added, "the situation to-day is much easier than two months ago; Austria's declarations are satisfactory, and there is no real proof that she means to stir up Albania or to enter the Sanjak. I have accepted her words without prejudice to the future. The horizon is equally clear as to Turkey; the Young Turks seem to realise the danger of their internal quarrels

[1] Yellow Book, No. 23. [2] Yellow Book, No. 25.

in the face of the foreigner and have pulled themselves together; they seem certain of success in the elections, and the crisis adumbrated in my *questionnaire* no longer seems probable. Assim Bey pronounces that the friendship of Russia is above all precious to him." Sazonoff seemingly thought that the future looked hopeful from the Russian angle; the Balkan Confederation, long pooh-poohed as a chimera, was on the way, and he even thought that Turkey herself might join up.

Louis plumed himself on this interview and drew rosy pictures which, unfortunately, had to be torn up. I was no better informed than he, but I was much less comfortable. "Why do you and Sazonoff make such a point of secrecy with regard to the Serbo-Bulgarian Alliance?" I asked Isvolsky.[1]

"Because if it got talked about, Austria might go for the Sanjak." Austria—so Sazonoff wrote privately to Isvolsky—had been held at arm's length from the pourparlers, and what guarantee had we that when she heard about them she would not take umbrage? How then could Sazonoff tell Louis so cheerfully that all was well in the Balkans?

I telegraphed my fears to our Ambassador on the 8th, and asked him to remind Sazonoff that France had never entered into any diplomatic conversation otherwise than in step with Russia, and that we should be treated likewise; *a posteriori* information would be useless, and Louis should ask whether any guarantees had been taken by Russia with regard to Austria in ratifying the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty, and whether Isvolsky's fears were well founded.

I took a stronger view of the Russian initiative than our Ambassador, and must assure myself against any complications with Vienna. A long despatch from M. de Panafieu, Minister to Sofia, added to my uneasiness.[2] He had spoken to Prince Ouroussoff, the Russian Chargé d'Affairs, who prided himself on having urged a Balkan entente on Guéchoff a year ago. The Bulgarian Minister was at first a little shy, fearing that it would be taken as a slap at

[1] Yellow Book, No. 26.
[2] Yellow Book, No. 24, Despatch, 3rd April.

Austria and Turkey: the Turko-Italian War, however, brought the two States together, and negotiations were speeded up under Russian auspices. Like Sazonoff, Panafieu said that the alliance was purely defensive; "it puts an end," he added, "to rivalry in Macedonia, makes friendly settlement of questions of schools, churches and religion, and delimits reciprocal spheres of interest." Panafieu realised that this meant an end to the *status quo*. His supplementary report was even more disquieting, as it showed fine contempt for the clause by which the two States undertook to do nothing without counsel with Russia. He quoted Prince Ouroussoff, that if serious measures were afoot Russia would be merely advised of decisions already taken. Ouroussoff, who was rather junior in the service, dropped some remarks ill-calculated to dissipate my suspicions. He considered the moment just ripe for the Balkan States to regulate the question of Macedonia and to realise their national aspiration: "Should Italy take action against the Dardanelles or Salonica, Bulgaria and Serbia would not hesitate to advance upon the Macedonian *vilayets*". Paléologue, who knew everything there was to be known about Ferdinand and his entourage, thought this within just surmise.

Rather to my surprise Sazonoff, after all his talk, left us for some time in uncertainty about many of the facts he had spontaneously broached. What if the Russian Government were not one with us in maintaining the *status quo*? What if Austria protruded herself into the Sanjak or Albania? What if the Balkan States declared war on Turkey? Russia's attitude was not clear: Sazonoff's silence was very tiresome. I telegraphed again on the 9th April to Louis: "You must get Sazonoff to explain himself; he must recognise that the conversation which he started cannot be dropped without definite conclusions." Louis agreed, but Sazonoff seemingly wanted to "drop" it, just as Prince Labanof had done in analogous circumstances; and, taking his cue from his predecessor, he proposed to mark time. Louis suggested that in order to break Sazonoff's silence he should promise Russia our diplomatic

assistance to maintain the *status quo*. I acquiesced in this, although the suggestion seemed superfluous; but I insisted that Louis should find out what Sazonoff was really up to.[1]

But just now the two were somewhat at loggerheads. Our Ambassador got no reply, and on the 21st April I again urged on him the imperative necessity of being correctly informed, as after the Serbo-Bulgarian Alliance and the Italian show at the Dardanelles we could not let Sazonoff drop like a hot potato what he had himself taken up. Sazonoff replied evasively. The internal crisis in Turkey, he considered, was no longer urgent, and Austro-Hungary was not likely to take action in the Sanjak, though the latter was a contingency to be borne in mind, as protests from Russia, France, England and Turkey would not then avail. The Minister said he would put this to his Government before taking a trip to the Crimea.

On April 13th/26th Sazonoff made a speech to the Duma in less optimistic tone than one would have thought from our Ambassador's report. He alluded very politely to Austria, stating that the two Governments "were united to maintain the *status quo* in the Balkans with the independence of the little Balkan States and the consolidation of young Turkey"; but he went on to say that the situation in the Balkans was not satisfactory. Albania might revolt and endanger her neighbours; in Macedonia revolutionary movements were chronic; and all troubles were aggravated by the Turko-Italian War, to which he hoped a term would be set by the intervention of the Powers. Bulgaria and Serbia, no doubt, would refrain from political adventures, but Turkey could encourage the peaceful disposition of the Balkan States by putting her house in order in Macedonia and by seeing to the economic needs of the Christian population. Wise words, but generalities which any caprice of the Balkan States would blow into air! Some days later I heard from Louis that Sazonoff was telling Isvolsky to discuss with me the question of Austria pouncing on the Sanjak. Of course I had to receive Isvolsky, who, on behalf of his Government, handed me a short note, from which I learnt

[1] Yellow Book, Nos. 14, 31 and 32.

that the verbal and written assurances of the Cabinet at Vienna left no reason to suspect Austria of any designs on the Sanjak of Novi Bazar. Sazonoff was sure that the Dual Monarchy would not do such a thing spontaneously, but only as a *riposte* to a violation—whether Albanian or Slav—of the *status quo*, whether on the side of Albania or on the side of the Slav States. In such case France and Russia could refer to a European concert having invited England to join them in doing so. Sazonoff enjoined strict vigilance on the part of French and Russian representatives in Vienna, so that if any sudden move should occur we could "draw the attention of the Austro-Hungarian Government to the consequences of their action". I replied that this was quite sound, but that Vienna was not the only place where vigilance was necessary, as there was always the danger of Balkan intrigues which might propel Austria into action. *An immediate appeal to Europe could be made should the* status quo *in the Peninsula be menaced by the act of a Slav State, but it will be too late to appeal to Europe after an action by the Cabinet of Vienna.*

"Isvolsky", I could tell our representative in Russia (13 May), "recognised the justice of my arguments and agreed to bring them to the knowledge of the Imperial Foreign Ministry. You would be wise to take note of them in your intercourse with Sazonoff."

Some hours later I saw Louis, who was still in Paris, and having put his own affairs straight, I confided my fears about the Balkan Alliance, of which neither of us then knew much. I was specially uneasy as to how this *coup* would react in Vienna and Budapest, and I could not agree with Sazonoff's proposal as to tackling the Austrian Cabinet unless precisely the same thing were previously done with the Balkan States. Fearing that Isvolsky might hang up my reply to St. Petersburg, I recommended Louis to let Sazonoff have it on his return.

News from Vienna confirmed my views. M. de St. Aulaire wrote me (1) that Austria, as soon as she knew of the alliance, could only see in it Russia's first step to avenge the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina: "If the alliance has

nothing between the lines it should be published; if kept secret there will be the semblance of a manœuvre against Vienna; Austro-Russian relations will then be as strained as in 1908."

Louis on his return to St. Petersburg let Sazonoff know what I had said, and, receiving no satisfactory answer, was bidden to ask for the audience with the Emperor, whom he had not seen for eight months. The Czar was most amiable, and stressed the importance of team work between England, France and Russia to ensure peace; nothing could be better than an entente of the five Powers. Louis asked if His Majesty were sure of the intentions of the Balkan States. "Yes, for the moment," replied the Emperor. He had spoken at Moscow with M. Daneff and M. Pachitch, and both guaranteed the maintenance of peace, only Daneff stipulated that Italy should not touch European Turkey. The Emperor said he would do his best to keep peace, but the danger lay in the Balkans thinking they had a great opportunity.

But what about the mysterious alliance of which all Europe was whispering, but of which neither the Czar nor Sazonoff whispered to Louis? Whilst Nicholas II. was receiving our Ambassador the Bulgarian Minister of Finance travelled to Paris about the loan recommended by Isvolsky but declined by the Bourse,[1] and Ferdinand with his Queen paid an official visit to Austria and Germany. At the gala-dinner at Schönbrunn the King, after an effusive eulogy of his Imperial host, said: "I should be happy, Sire, if you would consider this moment as a new earnest of the excellent relations between our two countries." From Vienna Ferdinand went to Potsdam, where he was appointed honorary colonel of the regiment Thuringia, and spoke of the "incomparable" German army as a model to his own. These pompous utterances compare curiously with what Ferdinand, when only Prince of Bulgaria, had said to myself. "I have an army of 300,000 men, and I put them all at the service of France." When I read of the royal visit I wondered whether Austria and Germany would not, at the finish, be

[1] Black Book, Letter, Isvolsky, 24th May to 6th June 1912.

better informed than we were as to any entente concluded by King Ferdinand's Government.

The full text of the Balkan Alliance only fell into my hands when in August I went to St. Petersburg, as Louis had never managed to get its details. M. Guéchoff has since told us that the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance dated from early in March 1912.[1] When appointed 11th/24th March 1911 to the double post of President of the Bulgarian Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs, his first care was to settle "the unfortunate Macedonian-Adrianople question, which had vexed Bulgaria since the Berlin conference". He tried to secure from the Young Turks autonomy for the Bulgarians of Macedonia, and found sympathy with Assim Bey, then Minister at Sofia and later Turkish Foreign Minister. Assim Bey was all against the "narrow" policy of the Young Turks towards the Balkan Christians, but his negotiations were nullified by the insistence of the Young Turks to make what reforms they pleased and in their own fashion, without any sort of foreign control. Guéchoff then put out feelers to Serbia through the Bulgarian Minister at Rome who had put through the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty of 1904. When Italy declared war on Turkey Guéchoff hurried home from his cure at Vichy, hearing *en route* from de Selves and Count Aehrenthal that the fight might be localised. In Vienna he spoke with his compatriots M. Rizoff and M. Stanciof, who furnished him with an *aide-mémoire* for his audience with Ferdinand, which took place a few days later in the royal train, for the moment stationed between Oedenburg and Vienna. At Belgrade he received a message from M. Milanovitch asking him to pay a midnight call, which lasted three hours, in his railway carriage at Lapovo.[2] Milanovitch then quoted Count Aehrenthal to the effect that the Young Turks would never regenerate the Ottoman Empire and that he, Aehrenthal, was in favour of an autonomous Albania extending to the Bulgarian frontiers, and to include the vilayets of Monastir and Uskub. Milanovitch saw in this proposed Albania a grave danger to the Slavs of

[1] Guéchoff, *Genesis of the Balkan War*, Berne, 1912.
[2] 28th Sept./11th Oct. 1911.

the Peninsula, but for the moment nothing could be done. The Powers, he said, were determined to localise the Turko-Italian war and to tolerate no complications in the Balkans : the best thing was to keep quiet. Serbia thought that a war with Turkey might mean consolidating the Young Turks, and it was necessary to await the issue of the Italian war and to be sure of Russia's future support.

Guéchoff left Lapovo with the promise of an alliance in his pocket and found on his arrival a very excited Bulgaria. Rumours were rife that Turkey was mobilising against her, and public opinion demanded a counter-mobilisation. Guéchoff sought both to soothe his colleagues and to spur them into an alliance with Serbia and Greece lest Bulgaria, estranged from Turkey by the Italian war, should be taken unawares.

Negotiations continued, not too easily, between Guéchoff and the Serbian Minister at Sofia. Serbia began by proposals in which nothing was said of autonomy for Macedonia ; Macedonia was to be split into three zones, one to be handed to Serbia, one to Bulgaria, whilst a third, at which both would tug, was to be referred to the arbitration of the Czar. Guéchoff saw in these proposals a " boycott of Macedonian autonomy ", and new proposals he received at the end of December left so much disputed territory that he could not accept them. Painful negotiations ensued between him and M. Spalaikovitch, the Russian representative at Sofia, M. Nekludoff and their military attaché Colonel Romanowski putting in their oars. According to Guéchoff the fear of the Russo-Turkish entente which might well cross Bulgarian aspirations materially hastened the alliance with Serbia. The Serbs eventually ceded most of the disputed territory to Bulgaria ; the two countries proceeded to a hypothetical partition, and when on the 2nd of April, suspecting that behind the curtain of *status quo* there were subsidiary clauses, I imposed vigilance on Louis, I was not far wrong.

The Treaty between the two States was signed 22nd February/7th March 1912, with a military convention to follow, the Macedonian clauses being kept secret so as to

avoid any suggestion of an offensive alliance against Turkey. But the veil shrouding the negotiations had not been unpierced. On June the 6th the *Temps* quoted the Russian review *Saprossy Gisny* to the effect that two months previously an alliance had been drawn up between Bulgaria and Serbia providing for a partition of Macedonia from a line drawn from the Serbo-Bulgarian frontier up to Lake Ochrida; and that the Treaty was to be signed by the two Sovereigns. Despite these well-founded rumours Louis could get nothing out of Sazonoff, and we continued ignorant of the Treaty, which was signed, not by the two Sovereigns but by their authorised representatives. The secret clauses were disquieting in their provision that the two States might intervene in Turkey in the event either of internal troubles or external conditions endangering the *status quo* in the Balkans. Action was not to be undertaken if opposed by Russia, and points in dispute between the two signatory Powers should be referred to the arbitration of Russia.[1] While the second clause dealt with the partition of territory, Serbia recognised Bulgaria's right to regions east of Rhodope and the river Struma, and Bulgaria recognised Serbia's right to the country north and east of Char-Planina; partition of these territories was to occur within three months after the re-establishment of peace. This Treaty was a bomb that might explode at the moment Europe least expected it.

Guéchoff had been no less busy about Greece. From the moment of the Italian ultimatum and Turkish mobilisation, even before he had definite answers from Belgrade, assurances were received of Greek support should Turkey strike at Bulgaria, although there was no formal proposal of alliance until 14th/27th April 1912. Guéchoff's proposal to Greece, less adventurous than those made with Serbia, provided only for autonomy for Macedonia and the rights which Article 23 of the Treaty of Berlin awarded to the Christian population. The Treaty was signed 16th/29th

[1] Thus contrary to what had been said to Panafieu, Russia had an absolute right of veto, and when the moment came she did not shrink from using it; but it was an abstract right dependent upon the interests of the two States, and under favourable conditions it would be easy for them to decline to recognise it.

May 1912, and a military convention followed in September. Although this alliance ostensibly provided for the maintenance of peace and disavowed provocative action against the Ottoman Empire, there was a loophole left for offensive action. If one of the two States "were attacked by Turkey, whether in territory or treaty rights or the fundamental rights of man", the contracting parties were bound to armed support. All this being done, Guéchoff had only to treat with Montenegro. The Montenegrin Chief of Cabinet was handled during the visit of Prince Nicolas to the Emperor Francis Joseph, to whom Ferdinand was also paying his respects, and the Balkan negotiations were, curiously enough, conducted by MM. Rizoff and Daneff, at the Hoffburg, to be continued at Sofia and Cettigny, where Guéchoff was able to round off his job.

Of all this I knew nothing when I told Sazonoff "the intrigues of the Balkan States needed watching even *more carefully* than those of Austria",[1] but at the same time I continued to disfavour the Bulgarian Loan at Paris, the object of which seemed to me suspect.

At the beginning of July Sazonoff told Louis of rather ugly symptoms in Bulgarian military quarters, and that Ferdinand had telegraphed to Sofia that he would return home from Austria, if his presence were necessary. Guéchoff had replied that he would warn his Sovereign if conditions grew more tense, but that the King's sudden arrival might alarm the population. Sazonoff urged the Bulgarian Ministry to try and quieten things, and in warning Paris and London, reminded us that we were "up against" something he had foreseen in his *questionnaire* of 14th February. Louis' reply to the Russian Minister was simply that he could rely on my support in almost anything to secure peace.[2]

Panafieu,[3] whom I had begged to back up his Russian colleague in calming Bulgaria, was assured by Guéchoff that he was dead against war and that the telegrams which had caused the commotion had been due to a mutiny of Turkish troops at Monastir; but if any initiative were taken by

[1] Yellow Book, No. 35, 13th May, and No. 38, 24th May.
[2] Yellow Book, No. 42.
[3] Yellow Book, No. 43.

Greece or Serbia his (Guéchoff's) position would be very difficult, and he might even be forced to resign. Panafieu thought his Russian colleague was over-nervous, but of course if the Turks could not keep up military discipline, it would be difficult to hold the Bulgarians back.

The prospect of a real row in the Balkans, coupled with my anxiety to maintain the *status quo*, did not sweeten me towards the young Slav States. But in bare justice one must admit that their unrest could be traced deep to the policy of Austria and Turkey, and no one can overlook how much there was to justify the conduct of these petty States in 1912.[1]

It is a matter of common knowledge that in 1913 Austria proposed to Italy military action against Serbia, and that in 1911 and 1912, before the Balkan War, she was no idle witness to the troubles in Albania. Austria, who considered the Mirdites, mostly Roman Catholics, as her special protégés, always lent a willing ear to the complaints of the Malissores, who were Orthodox, and she took advantage of the blunders and excesses of the Young Turks to enlarge her influence in Albania. In 1911, during the long insurrection of the Malissores, Austria strongly advocated their cause at Constantinople, and when the Young Turks withheld satisfaction, the Austrian Press sounded a threatening note; the peace patched up in August was broken through the bad faith of the Young Turks, and on the 9th February 1912 the

[1] A German, C. Breysag, wrote that Austria must have completely changed her policy towards the aspiration of a "Great Serbia" in order to establish good feeling between herself and the Balkan peoples (*Der Tag*, No. 220, 1918). Another German, Professor Foerster, comments on E. D. Morel's book: "In writing of the 'cunning' propaganda by Russians and Serbs in the territory of the Danubian Monarchy, Mr. Morel does not see that this propaganda was a consequence of a hostile attitude of the Austro-Hungarian Government to the justifiable aspirations of its Slav populations" (*My Battles*). Foerster adds that it was a fatal blindness on the part of Germans and Magyars in Austro-Hungary that they failed to develop a federal State. Mukhtar Pasha, speaking of the dissensions between Serb and Bulgar, Slav and Greek, laments that Turkey carried out a policy exasperating to all alike and bringing an entente between these peoples. Také Jonescu, a statesman of admitted impartiality, writes of the Hapsburg Empire: "It is a fossil in the modern world; it is a state without being a nation. It is nothing in reality but a dynasty, a government and an army" (*Les Origines de la Guerre*, Paris, Didier, 1915).

Albanian chiefs issued a manifesto from Scutari denouncing them to the Powers. There was trouble at Istok, Ipek and Mitrovitza; the Turks concentrated troops at Ferizovitch and in the defile of Katchanik, a battle was fought at Ipek, and the insurrection seemed to grow into a national rising. Austria never wavered in her thick-and-thin support of her protégés, and Italy asserted that a stream of arms was flowing from Vienna to the Albanians. Italy herself was no disinterested party: she had much ado in 1911 to restrain the Garibaldians from going in with the Malissores, and in 1912 the Porte liked to attribute the movement in Albania to the machinations of her opponent. Italian diplomacy may have had a finger in the pie, but Austria's clandestine activities proved the main factor in Albania, and it was Austria who professed—as was obvious in 1912 and 1913—the chief interest in this region She had a very large Catholic clientele; she financed schools, hospitals and churches, and kept a jealous eye on anything and everything which occurred. Sazonoff may not have looked for an immediate Austrian entry into the Sanjak of Novi Bazar, but the Albanian ferment might at any moment serve as a pretext for it. Here was a new source of anxiety for us, and we had to be doubly wideawake.

CHAPTER XV

Solidarity of the Cabinet—M. Briand—M. Léon Bourgeois—Other Ministers and Under-Secretaries of State — President Fallières — Travels in Lorraine.

In the rush of events and round of troubles a large crumb of comfort was to be found in the unity of the Cabinet, where the alarm of 1911 had made domestic politics pale in importance compared with foreign affairs. Aristide Briand often came from his office along the Seine and Tuileries to my room, which was always open to him. He was already, what he thirteen years later described himself to the Chamber, "a man of conversation", and one never ceased to admire his almost uncanny gift of penetration, his consummate tact, his quasi-feline charm which sometimes reminded me of my Siamese cat or of Anatole France's "Sleeping Prince of the City of Books"; Briand's collaboration, and more especially his *flair* in foreign affairs, became more valuable and more delightful every day. His approval of my policy was sealed by his powerful contribution to my election as President; he knew the ins and outs of the Louis incident, and in February 1913, as President of the Council, thought it right to recommend to President Fallières that a change should be made in the Embassy. Léon Bourgeois was also a tower of strength; he did not confine himself to the work of his own ministry, nor did he merely lend us his name as sometime President of the Chamber and President of the Council; it was as former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and President of the Senatorial Commission on the 4th of November Treaty, that he realised better than any one how grave a colour Agadir, following hard on Tangiers, had given to the European situation. The same

feeling prompted him, two years later, to take office in M. Ribot's meteoric ministry. A thorough democrat, and in favour of international arbitration, he was an ardent patriot; he swallowed his dislike to proportional representation which had been voted by the Chamber in 1911, and which we had promised to support, because he felt that the future of the country was at stake, and that he must sacrifice his personal convictions to join us. When President Fallières was about to retire I was one of the many who thought Léon Bourgeois the best choice to succeed him: no one could have exercised Presidential functions with a better blend of authority and tact. I told him this in April 1912, on our way to St. Germain-en-Laye to see a midday eclipse of the sun, when he brushed the idea aside, alleging that he was far from strong, and to my genuine surprise told me that I was the right man for the place. The notion did not appeal to me, as it would mean giving up the hard work in which I delighted, and perhaps some of the personal convictions to which I clung. I told Bourgeois that I was comparatively young, that in the exercise of authority I had probably trodden on many corns, that I loved fighting and individual freedom, and I renewed my own proposal as regards himself; it was not until the eve of the election and on the persistent pressure of Bourgeois—based on his approval of my foreign policy—that I accepted the candidature.

M. Steeg, Minister of the Interior, was just as intimate, loyal and devoted a friend. We had fought together—and won—for electoral reform, with many offensives and counter-offensives! On the 4th of June the Chamber threw out the *scrutin d'arrondissement* by a large majority, but our project of proportional representation was made the victim of one of those textual transactions (to use a post-war term) in which the desire to conciliate opponents brings about new inconveniences. During two long *séances* in June, Steeg and I stood in the breach and carried it, but we had always promised not to govern without a Republican majority, and here the Left was divided, the Socialists with us and the Radicals split up. After careful examination of the *scrutin*, the Cabinet found that with

defalcations from the Right and Progressives, we had a majority of forty Republican votes. The next day, a deputy, M. Breton, tabled a motion that we could not get the reform unless the Left were with us, but my declaration was eventually approved by 395 votes to 15; all was well, but what a waste of time! I was obliged to speak five times on the very day of the Isvolsky "storm" in my room over the formula. The Bill for Proportional Representation was passed by the Chamber, but would the Senate do likewise? Clemenceau, quite strong again after an operation, publicly pronounced for the majority system, and predicted that the Upper Chamber would not pass the new law. There were other internal worries. In Paris the taxi-drivers and owners had a sharp tussle, and at Marseilles, Dunkirk and Bordeaux the naval packet service suddenly stopped, and we had to use torpedo-boats for postal service with Algeria, Corsica and Tunis.

Like Briand and Léon Bourgeois, Steeg took the keenest interest in foreign policy, and his article in *L'Action Nationale*, 25th March, printed my pet phrase that even if I were sure of victory I would never assume the responsibility of an armed conflict. May I commend this to the Germans, or pro-Germans, who paint me either as greedy of glory and craving for conquests, or as a Lorrainer determined upon recovering the lost provinces even at the cost of a murderous war?

Klotz presented the Bill of the 1913 Budget in June, and the Chamber agreed to it with the least possible delay. Happy days when receipts pleasantly balanced expenditure at about four milliard francs with no distinction between gold franc and paper!

Millerand, taciturn and reserved, devoted himself to methodical preparations for national defence. He hurried on the *Lois des Cadres*, sought to swell the resources from our African colonies, strengthened the air service, and fully availed himself of industrial and scientific progress for military purposes, and above all, he made it his business to give authority where there was responsibility; he reorganised the General Staff and inspection of schools, instituted technical

inspectors for artillery and engineers, transformed the military college at Versailles and Fontainebleau, and decentralised the administration of army corps. These were measures of sheer defence and an additional guarantee of peace, and in 1912, despite the increase of military establishments in Germany, no one thought of the reintroduction of the " Three Years Period " of military service ; the new German military laws were to determine Briand and Barthou as to this. True, at the end of 1912 Millerand told the Council that two years were insufficient to train cavalry : the Council declined point-blank to accept any prolongation of service. The War Minister laid more weight upon the moral than upon the material strength of the army ; he tried to exclude politics from all ranks, to stiffen authority and discipline, and to get unison between the army and the nation. The need of such unison was keenly felt, and M. Fallières, when opening the Military School at St. Cyr (24th July 1912), said : " They [the soldiers fallen on the battlefield] have left behind the most wonderful legacy of warrior virtues upon which any nation can pride itself. . . . The country knows this well, and shows itself justly proud of its army, attentive to its well-being, and jealous of its power and future. . . . Never has the army been nearer to the heart of France."

The spring review and the military tattoos [1] in which the Parisians delighted, were organised by Millerand, and warmly encouraged by the President, largely to link up the people with the army. The Bey of Tunis was present at the Longchamps review, and one felt that after the unfortunate contretemps over the *Manouba* business in Tunis, it was well he should see and appreciate the appearance and spirit of our army. Millerand kept in mind the advice of our military attaché in Berlin, to work as silently as possible : with General Joffre he noiselessly worked out various measures to be instantly applied if war broke out, measures impossible to improvise at the last moment but which were passed without any debate on the 4th

[1] The Germans after their invasion of Belgium quoted a report from Baron Guillaume, to the effect that the success of the tattoos showed a revival of the military spirit ; a *military* spirit perhaps, but not militarist.

August 1914. The same secrecy was of course observed at the periodical meetings of the Supreme Council of War at the Élysée, where the Government had the help of the Minister of Marine and the Chiefs of both Staffs in probing the technical problems of national defence. The Germans have affected righteous indignation at a mention in Paléologue's memoirs of a conference (21st February 1912) dealing with expected support from England and Russia in event of our being attacked, and have twisted what was a simple Ministerial duty into a proof of warlike intentions. The Black Book and Stieve have published the Franco-Russian proceedings at these meetings, and German propaganda has sought in vain to score a point. The conference of 31st August 1911 was the seventh; that of July 1912 was the eighth, and I suppose no one will imagine that from 1904 to 1911 France and Russia were continuously bent on war. The *procès-verbal* of the meeting of the 13th July 1912 between Generals Joffre, Castelnau, Matton, Gilinsky and Colonel Ignatief shows what the French Staff was anxious about in the event of a campaign. Joffre apprehended that Russia would set most of her troops against Austria and that we should not profit sufficiently by her arms when meeting Germany. Should an attack come from the Triple Alliance, Joffre held, "the great thing is to annihilate the German forces: delays in mobilisation and concentration of the allied armies must be reduced to a minimum; the development of railway communications is an essential factor in this result". He remembered "that the Russian railways used in mobilising were not all double-tracked, which would mean a fatal delay in mobilisation", and he pointed out the Russian lines which should be doubled or quadrupled. When, the next month, I went to St. Petersburg, Millerand and Joffre begged me to urge on the Russian Government to complete this work. "You see you *wanted* war," cry Germans and pro-Germans. We did not want war, but we were not so criminal as to leave the Triple Entente unarmed while the Triple Alliance was armed to the teeth.

Delcassé was if possible more silent about the navy than Millerand about the army. He spoke — with his

slight Midi accent — so seldom that he might have had over the door of his Ministry the device of my native town, "More thought than words". He disliked the sound of his own voice even in council, and only wanted to attend to his own business. His inspections were thorough, and his bitterest grief came with the disaster to the submarine *Vendémiaire*, which was rammed by the battleship *St. Louis* five miles from Cape La Hogue, and sunk with two officers and twenty men. Under Delcassé's auspices the naval convention between France and Russia was concluded ; the initiative here was taken by the Russian Minister of Marine, Admiral Grigorovitch, and I merely minuted my approval on the note when passing it to Delcassé, to whom it was entirely welcome. On 8th April we heard from Louis that the principle of periodical communications between the two naval staffs had been definitely accepted by the Imperial Government, and that Prince Lieven, Chief of the Russian Naval Staff, was about to come to France. This distinguished admiral arrived in Paris the first fortnight in July, and studied with Admiral Aubert, our naval Chief of Staff, the various problems of a defensive war, and the pair signed a convention providing for the co-operation of the two fleets in any happening indicated in the alliance. A second article provided that the chiefs of the two naval staffs could correspond, and at the end of the month we heard that the Emperor was highly satisfied with Lieven's report. German authors see in this modest combination another proof of a premeditated war. But what have they to say about the intimacy between the General Staffs in Germany and Austria in the normal exercise of their alliance ? Every one knew, and no one was surprised to know, of the perfect and perpetual unison between the Central Empires with regard to mobilisation and concentration of all arms by land and sea.

In France the Minister of Public Instruction ranks next to the Minister of Marine ; in 1912 this office was held by M. Guist'hau, who had an easy time at first but a little later had to grapple—and grappled well—with such difficult questions as anti-militarist and syndicalist propaganda.

M. Jean Dupuy, Minister of Public Works, handled cleverly the affair of the new Calvados mines, which a German, Thyssen, tried to get hold of; Dupuy was taciturn in council, but when he did speak he gave sound advice, especially in foreign affairs. The same can be said of M. Pams, Minister of Agriculture, who never spoke without uttering wise words, and thought "little people listen but should not be heard". M. Lebrun, Minister of Colonies, like myself a Lorrainer, and M. Fernand David were loyal, patriotic and warm-hearted colleagues, and the Under-Secretaries of State, MM. Chaumet, Réné, Besnard, Paul Morel and Léon Berard, bore an honourable part in all our councils. I made no sort of speech, whether in Paris or in the provinces, without talking the matter over with my colleagues.

Of my many official tours, three were not of the usual humdrum nature. Accompanied by Lebrun, I visited Bar-le-Duc for the aviation fêtes, and was greatly impressed by the enthusiasm of the Lorrainers, who as a rule hate noisy demonstrations. Some weeks later I was asked to be present at the annual meeting of the League of Instruction at Gerardmer in the Vosges, and I could remind my hearers of the pattern of combined sang-froid and patriotism set by our eastern provinces at a dangerous moment the preceding year: it was this moment of national danger which had led to the formation of my Cabinet, and it was indeed well to have men such as Briand and Léon Bourgeois united with me. Education, I said, must be kept free from political influence while we instilled love of country and devotion to our free republican institutions, and I alluded to such governmental cares as our Treaty with Germany, our negotiations with England and Spain, the Turko-Italian War in Morocco, and our determination to keep our friendships, our alliances, and peace. At Nancy a few days later Lebrun and I were greeted by an immense crowd, but in the midst of *vivas* my heart was aching for Henri Poincaré, the cousin who had been an elder brother to me. Orators proclaimed on his tomb the loss to France of a great scientist and man of fine thought,

and the doyen of the Faculty of Science in felicitous phrase said: "Poincaré came, like Hermitte, of a Lorraine family; he saw Nancy, his birthplace, invaded, then his province mutilated, and heard the groans of defeat rising beyond the blue crests of the Vosges. He laboured for science but also for his country." Henri Poincaré was my first thought when I entered Nancy, when the Council and Professors of the University, grouped around the Rector, received us, and when I tendered the gratitude of the Government to the primary, secondary and superior instructors, who represented the French Republic's work of public education.

The famous museum displayed to us its masterpieces of the locksmith's art, its ironware, its engraving by Callot, all pervaded by the fragrance of a bygone age. And after the museum came the banquet in the beautiful *salons* of the Hôtel de Ville, with a speech of thanks to the town for its magnificent reception. How delightful it all was! and though dark clouds were already on the horizon, who could have foreseen that two years later Nancy would be bombarded and assaulted and its suburbs devastated by the Kaiser, and that Mézières, my dear old friend Mézières, would die in territory occupied and insulted by the enemy, under all the privations of exile but with utter belief and trust in France? Joyous crowds gathered before the Hôtel de Ville for the beautiful fireworks and rejoicings which were the only answer on the French side of the frontier to Wilhelm's military manœuvres, a few kilometres distant.

CHAPTER XVI

Voyage to Russia — The *Condé* — At Cronstadt and St. Petersburg —Stay at the French Embassy—Conversation with M. Sazonoff and M. Kokovtzoff.

SOON after the formation of our Ministry an idea occurred to all of us which was to be realised before the year was out. Our slender confidence in Isvolsky, especially after his rôle in 1911, the obvious lack of liaison between the Russian and French Governments, the impression that there was some flaw in the alliance, caused us, and especially Briand and Léon Bourgeois, to think it might be well for me to go to St. Petersburg during the next Parliamentary vacation. M. Sazonoff had come to Paris in December 1911; it was right that his visit should be returned. The Sazonoff complaints against Louis, faintly but faithfully echoed by Isvolsky, and the wish to clear up any misunderstandings, had strengthened the Cabinet in this view. Louis sounded the Emperor and his Government on the subject, and a convenient date was fixed.

Having submitted a decree for the signature of the President of the Republic, appointing Aristide Briand to act for me, I left Paris for Dunkirk early on the 5th August, taking with me M. Daeschner, my *chef de Cabinet*, and M. Lucas, attached to the Ministry of Finance, Isvolsky having preceded me overland.

A torpedo-boat took us to the cruiser *Condé*, where the officers of the ship were drawn up at the gangway. The inevitable salute of nineteen guns was fired, bells pealed on the shore, the "Marseillaise" was played, and I retired to the captain's quarters which he had kindly assigned to me, to have some last words with Steeg, who

had come so far with me. After months of over-work, the prospect of several days of comparative solitude appealed to me, though my mind was by no means easy with regard to the state of Europe. On the 1st August our Minister at Sofia had telegraphed saying that the Agreement between Greece and Bulgaria was signed, and that although Guéchoff had assured our representative that the pact was of a purely defensive character, it was giving rise to disquieting diplomatic activity in the Balkans. Our consul at Uskub had informed us on the 2nd that armed Albanians appeared to be massing in the Kara-Dagh, a chain of mountains separating Northern Albania from the Uskub plain, and from Monastir on the 3rd we heard of signs of Balkan revolutionary activity and of another dynamite outrage against the Korrak of Ochrida.

I arrived at Cronstadt on the afternoon of the 9th, under almost tropical sunshine. Salutes were exchanged, the *Condé* dropped anchor close to the Russian cruiser *Aurora*, and a swarm of Russian and French journalists rushed up to the bridge, only to hear the commonplaces of the voyage.

Towards 5 o'clock the pretty Russian Admiralty yacht the *Néva*, with Admiral Grigorovitch, Louis and the staff of the Embassy on board, anchored by the *Condé*.

The next morning, one of the *Condé's* boats took me to the Admiralty yacht, where I had dined the previous night. The Admiral, who spoke French admirably, had arranged with Louis that, as the *Condé* drew too much water to ascend the river, we should do the trip from Cronstadt to St. Petersburg on his boat. At the St. Petersburg quay we found Kokovtzoff, as also Sazonoff, whose acquaintance I was now to make ; behind them were Isvolsky and some high officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Court.

A fairly large crowd gathered on the quay were shouting hurrahs as Louis and I drove off to our Embassy, where he gave me the ground floor apartments—looking out on the Neva—and set me to work on the programme he had drawn up. He took me first to the Peter and Paul fortress,

and then to the Cathedral, the Westminster of the Russian dynasty, which seemed, however, to have nothing Russian about it. But from Peter the Great to Alexander III., fifty-three sovereigns or members of the Imperial family sleep there, and the white marble sarcophagi are not without grandeur. I was received by General Staal, who gave me a few explanations and led me to the tomb of the author of the Franco-Russian alliance, where I placed a wreath, on behalf of the President of the Republic and the French Government.

After leaving the cathedral I proceeded to *La Maison du Peuple*, a philanthropic and prohibitional institution, but which seemed to me a little behind the times for a city in which the 1905 revolution had taken place. Here, as elsewhere, I was respectfully saluted by passers-by who had been informed of the presence of a French Minister, but, generally speaking, politeness was not a great feature on the part of the inhabitants, and it seemed that St. Petersburg was less keen about the alliance than any of our provincial towns. Calls had to be made and cards left on Grand Dukes, members of the Government, and foreign Ambassadors, before my visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which gave me just a glance of the Place du Senat, the Nevski Prospect and the Admiralty. The Peter the Great monument made me feel very proud of France; the Alexandrine column in the midst of the Place du Palais, also the work of one of my compatriots, was less satisfactory.

Sazonoff was waiting for me in his room, armed with numerous *dossiers*; he had eyes slightly projecting, a long nose, a pointed profile, smiling lips, and very pleasant manner. Our conversation was long and cordial, and the report which he made to the Emperor has been published by the Soviets. I drew up some notes summarising the talk, which I read to Louis, and, on my return, to the President of the Republic and to my colleagues: these notes were filed in the archives of the Ministry, and do not differ on any essential point from Sazonoff's report.

Chinese affairs were the first discussed.

" M. Sazonoff thanked me for having succeeded in opening up the Consortium to Russia. He did not conceal from me that his Government had been surprised and grieved at the manner in which the subject had been treated at Paris for the last two years. 'But that is past.'

"*Anatolian Railways.* I complained to M. Sazonoff as to the vacillating policy of his Government; M. Bompard had agreed with M. Tcharikoff. The enterprise had been handed over to the French with the approval of Russia; and now the French were being asked to agree to postpone putting it into effect as regards the whole of one section of the system; and even to give up certain lines. It is obvious that France could scarcely combine with Russia to request the Turkish Government to give up parts of an enterprise which would benefit her. All that France can do is to let Russia take the matter up with the Porte, but only on the condition that the French enterprise should not unreasonably suffer, and that on no account should the matter be allowed to get into the hands of the American group which is waiting to pounce on it.

" On these general principles M. Sazonoff pronounced himself in agreement with me; he considered it absurd 'that we should have been asked to associate ourselves with Russian *démarches*'. He told me that he had been urged on by the General Staff.

" I insisted that it was impossible to forbid the Ottoman Government to construct railways on its own territory. The 1900 Convention gave it the right to do so. It cannot give way on this point; too many restrictions must not be imposed, else the Ottoman Government will naturally apply to the Americans. M. Sazonoff recognised the justice of these observations and promised to study the matter 'in the most conciliatory spirit'."

From this résumé, as also from the remarks of M. Sazonoff, it will be seen how our economic interests in Asia Minor often knocked up against Russian policy, and how keenly the Imperial Government opposed the construction of Turkish railways in those parts where it feared future conflict with the Porte.

Our conversation on the Italo-Turkish War was naturally more important. It formed the topic of conversation on several occasions during the period of my stay in the Russian capital. Here is the report which I drew up:

" I explained to M. Sazonoff what had been the French point of view since the commencement of the war, and why we have

always insisted upon scrupulously upholding neutrality. However much we sympathised with Italy, and however sincerely resolved we were to carry out our 1902 Agreements with regard to Tripolitania, we cannot compromise our authority in our African provinces. M. Sazonoff admitted that a few months ago he did not exactly understand the reasons for our attitude, and that he considered we were less sympathetic towards Italy than he would have wished. I explained to him the circumstances which gave rise to the *Manouba*, *Carthage*, and *Tavigneno* incidents. I quickly proved to him that we were in the right, and that Italy was wrong. I pointed out our efforts to blot out misunderstandings, and he told me how gratified he was to see these cleared up. He is as Italophile as M. Isvolsky. I informed him of an unofficial conversation which M. Bompard had had with two members of the Turkish Government, with regard to the possibility of sending a peace mission to Tripolitania. He thought that a new and good idea, which, if put into effect, might, even without a preliminary armistice, lead to better relations. He was convinced that Italy will accept the proposal, if made officially, and he heartily approved that M. Bompard should endeavour to bring it about. On seeing M. Sazonoff again, I informed him that, according to a telegram from Rome, Italy agrees to the proposal. He showed great pleasure.

" I later told Sazonoff that the Italian Chargé d'Affaires had made a *démarche* at Paris which did not coincide with the telegram. Italy made her acceptance dependent upon conditions which were quite unacceptable. She wanted the Porte to agree beforehand to advise the Arabs to accept Italian sovereignty. Sazonoff considered, as I did, that this demand was ill-timed and foolish.

" On a later occasion I communicated to him the Italian reply, corrected according to our observations. This time, he was of opinion that the formula was acceptable, and that consequently we should do all in our power to obtain the Turkish proposal."

I also informed the Russian minister of General Joffre's wishes expressed to General Gilinsky :

" *Mobilisation.*—M. Sazonoff, at my request, took note of the minutes of the meetings of the Chiefs of the Staff. I explained to him the necessity to double and quadruple the number of railway lines and to alter the gauge of the two lines to fit in with the Russian gauge, from Warsaw up to the German and Austrian frontiers, as these lines were not of the same width. He thought

that the conversion of the line towards Austria had already been decided upon. With regard to the other points, he promised me his assistance. The Minister for War told me that, for his part, he had just made a favourable report." [1]

I also talked to M. Sazonoff about the naval convention recently signed by Admiral Aubert and Prince de Lieven.

" I pointed out that the military convention of 1893 had been incorporated in the diplomatic alliance ; and that it had furthermore been referred to in 1899, in letters exchanged between Count Monravieu and M. Delcassé. I told him that in my opinion it would be desirable to proceed in the same manner in respect to the naval convention and to sanction it by an exchange of letters between us, in which it would be made clear that the Emperor and the Government of the Republic approved this naval convention. M. Sazonoff was quite agreeable to this suggestion."

Somehow or other there were indiscretions made at St. Petersburg or Paris as to the draft naval convention, and varied commentaries appeared in the Central Empires. The German and Austrian Chargés d'Affaires spoke at the Quai d'Orsay—they said that they had come quite " incidentally " and " unofficially " — of the impression created by the sudden news of this agreement. The reply was

[1] On this point a sad blunder occurs in M. Fabre-Luce's book: The author says: " In 1912, M. Kokovtzoff, Russian Minister of Finance, is to purchase our financial support by promises of armaments. In June of this year Verneuil came to St. Petersburg and notified the two conditions which the Government of M. Poincaré imposed: increase of effectives, construction of strategic railways. Kokovtzoff, who was sent to Paris, hotly debated the point." If M. Fabre-Luce had more carefully read M. Kokovtzoff's report in the Black Book, he would have seen that it was not a 1912 document; it is subsequent to the German military laws of 1913; the exact date is 19th November 1913, Russian date, that is, 2nd December 1913 ; and M. Kokovtzoff certainly does not refer, and rightly so, to M. Poincaré's Government which no longer existed, but to the Government of M. Barthou, President of the Council; of M. Pichon, Minister for Foreign Affairs; and of M. Charles Dumont, Minister of Finance. M. Fabre-Luce therefore antedated Verneuil's visit to Russia and that of M. Kokovtzoff to France by one year.

With the exception of this point, the information which he gives to his readers is correct. For my own part, I can affirm that I did not discuss at St. Petersburg any question of effectives or of a loan. I should have liked to think that reference to the year 1912 in M. Fabre-Luce's book was a misprint or a slip; but the author himself gives this wrong date when speaking of the Government of M. Poincaré. The error therefore is not a printer's error.

given to them that France, in her relationship with the partners of the Triple Entente, had always clung to the maintenance of the balance in Europe, and that certain strategic problems would be treated by the Staffs of the Allied armies. M. Briand informed me on the 10th August of this double *démarche* and of the answer given.

We had been, as usual, studiously polite in our reply to these inquiries of Germany and Austria; but can one see France and Russia complaining at Berlin or Vienna, even "incidentally" and "unofficially", as to any naval or military conventions of the Triple Alliance? Germany had also requested explanations at St. Petersburg, and apparently with less reserve than at Paris. The memorandum which I had written after my conversation with Sazonoff has three *post scripta*, two by me and one by Daeschner.

"(1) M. Sazonoff told me that the German Ambassador had requested explanations with regard to the naval convention. 'I replied', he said, 'that Russia and France, being allies, had the right to provide for all possibilities on land and sea, but they had done nothing which modified the pacific nature of their alliance'. (2) When I saw M. Sazonoff again, he told me that the German Ambassador had asked for an audience with the Emperor. The Emperor replied that 'he was very busy and that the Ambassador must wait—approach me again in a week's time'. (3) According to what M. Schilling told M. Daeschner, the reply made to the Ambassador was couched in the following terms: 'The Emperor is always very willing to receive Ambassadors, but at this moment he is with the troops and cannot fix a date for the audience for several days'."

The chief subject of our discussion was, naturally, the situation in the Balkans.

"*Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty.*—I asked M. Sazonoff for some details of the Serbo-Bulgarian and Graeco-Bulgarian conventions. I did not conceal from him that I found it difficult to understand why these documents had not been communicated to France by Russia. M. Isvolsky had said he was not fully conversant with them, but he assured me that they had as their object the *status quo*. It, however, appeared very improbable that so much time had been taken in drawing up conventions, the only object of

which was to guarantee the *status quo*. It is probable that the most important feature of these agreements really referred to a possible division. M. Sazonoff agreed. He told me that he was still ignorant of the text of the Graeco-Bulgarian convention, which in itself did not define a frontier line, but he would communicate to me the text of the Serbo-Bulgarian convention and the map annexed to it.

" I again saw M. Sazonoff. He was holding the Russian text of the Serbo-Bulgarian convention. He read it to me, translating it as he did so. The only mention of the *status quo* was concerning measures to be taken in case it was upset. Bulgaria and Serbia reciprocally pledged themselves to endeavour to concert together as regards mobilisation. If one considered that mobilisation was necessary, the other was to be so informed; if the other refused to do likewise, recourse was to be had to arbitration by Russia. Arbitration by Russia appeared, moreover, in almost every line of the convention. One portion of the frontier, near Lake Ochrida, was not definitely fixed. Russia was to be given the task of fixing it, when the time came. This frontier mentioned in the convention ran from the N.E. to the S.W. between the meeting point of the three frontiers, Serbian, Bulgarian and Turkish, and Lake Ochrida. It gave the whole of the eastern portion to Bulgaria and the whole of the western portion to Serbia, without fixing any limit for Bulgaria in the direction of Salonika. No limit was ascribed to Serbia on the Albanian side. The Treaty contained the germs, not only of a war against Turkey but a war against Austria. It established, besides, the hegemony of Russia over the Slav kingdoms, as Russia is accepted as arbitrator on all questions. *I pointed out to M. Sazonoff that this convention did not tally at all with the definition which had been given to me, that it really was a war convention, and that it not only revealed the* arrière-pensées *of the Serbs and Bulgarians, but it was to be feared that their hopes would be stimulated by Russia, and that this possible division was a bait to their covetousness.* He admitted that the Russian Minister at Sofia, when transmitting this convention to St. Petersburg, had stigmatised it as a *war convention*, but as Serbia and Bulgaria had pledged themselves not to declare war, and even not to mobilise without the approval of Russia, the latter could exercise a right of veto which would assure the maintenance of peace, and Russia would not fail to do so."

In his report to the Emperor concerning this conversation, Sazonoff did full justice to my criticisms. He frankly recorded that I considered the convention to be more *aggressive than defensive, and saw danger in it.* He

insisted on the intention of Russia not to allow an attack to take place, and he added :

" After having confirmed our mutual intention to closely observe Balkan events and to continue to exchange our information and our opinions on the subject, we again agreed with M. Poincaré to act together according to circumstances, immediately complications of any kind arose, with a view, by diplomatic means, to prevent the situation becoming worse."

I was, as a matter of fact, obliged to take my part in the Balkan agreements, which had of course been signed without my knowledge, as they were actually in existence.

Having said a word to Sazonoff on behalf of the Government of the Republic as to neither consulting nor informing us, it only remained to take care Russia should keep her promise and go shares with us in preventing war in the Balkans.

According to M. Sazonoff, I added, moreover, some words which I did not put into my note, as they seemed to be self-evident.

" M. Poincaré considers it his duty to emphasise, with regard to this point, that French public opinion would not permit the Government of the Republic to decide upon military action in respect of purely Balkan questions if Germany did not take part, and if Germany did not of her own initiative put into play the *casus foederis*. In the latter case we could certainly rely upon France to fulfil her obligations to us in an exact and complete manner."

That was the actual reply which I gave to a question by M. Sazonoff. I could not say anything else, and no other French Minister for Foreign Affairs would have said otherwise. It meant :

" Do not rely upon us to give you military assistance in the Balkans, even if you are attacked by Austria. We shall fulfil the obligations of our alliance but we shall not go beyond them. We are under an obligation to render you military help if you are attacked by Germany, or by Austria if the latter is assisted by Germany, just as you are under an obligation to help us if we are attacked by Germany, or by Italy assisted by Germany. If such circumstances should arise, we shall fulfil our duty ; don't ask us to do more."

That is what I said to M. Sazonoff; that is what he loyally reported. I said nothing different to that in a conversation to Isvolsky at a later date, which conversation has given rise to the most fantastic commentaries, based on inexact information; as much care was expended by the same people in publishing in German, or pro-German, articles, Isvolsky's interpretation (the falsity of which was proved the same day), as in ignoring Sazonoff's accurate reports.[1]

[1] M. Fabre-Luce has commented on these words of the Russian Minister, but he has altered my statements; and it is strange that having had the exceptional advantage of having been attached to the Quai d'Orsay during war time, and before the age of twenty, and then having been at the French Embassy at London for several weeks, he did not learn to read a diplomatic document correctly. In accordance with his custom, he does not quote—he translates. In pretending to report my words, he says, France will only come to the aid of Russia if Germany is implicated in the conflict. Here is at once an inequality between the obligations of the two allies. France will be mixed up, in any case, in a Russo-German war. Russia will not be implicated in a Franco-German war, if such war had a colonial origin. An allegation which is doubly wrong. On the one hand, I did not say that France would come to the assistance of Russia if Germany was implicated in the conflict. I said, and Sazonoff so reported, that in accordance with the Treaty, France would not give military assistance to Russia in the Balkans unless Germany of her own initiative supplied the *casus foederis*, that is to say, unless she attacked Russia. On the other hand, Sazonoff did not say, and I do not for a moment think he said, that "Russia would not become involved in a Franco-German war, if such war had a colonial origin". This sentence is Fabre-Luce's; whatever he wishes to imply, it is certainly not Sazonoff's, and if one takes the trouble to compare Fabre-Luce's passage with M. Sazonoff's, one is amazed at such liberty, or rather abuse of translation. With regard to my remark that France could not decide on military action in respect of purely Balkan questions if Germany did not herself, by her aggression, supply the *casus foederis*, Sazonoff said his reply was: "While we are always ready to range ourselves on the side of France, in circumstances provided for in our alliance, we on our side could not justify in the eyes of Russian public opinion our participation in military operations which were the result of colonial questions outside of Europe, so long as vital French interests were not affected". Literally, and as Sazonoff wrote it, this sentence never meant that Russia would not intervene in a war which had, as Fabre-Luce puts it, "a colonial origin". It meant at the most, that Russia could not take an active part in military operations outside of Europe before our vital interests were affected. But Sazonoff commenced by clearly saying that Russia would always range herself on the side of France in circumstances outlined in the Treaty of Alliance. That is, naturally, if Germany declared war on us. That is all there is to say regarding Fabre-Luce's comments. Any one reading them without knowing the text may be deceived. Whoever reads the text and compares it with his comments can only be surprised to see this young writer giving such flights of imagination as serious history.

Lastly, I spoke to the Russian Minister concerning the " affaire Louis ".

" I told M. Sazonoff that I deeply regretted the incident which had arisen. I did not refer to M. Isvolsky, to whom I knew he was deeply attached, and for whom he had always retained the deference of an old subordinate. But I told him that M. Louis had the entire confidence of the French Government, that he was well thought of at the Quai d'Orsay, and that it had been on the cards to appoint him Secretary-General of the Ministry, etc. He told me that he quite recognised Louis's merits, but he reproached him with having adopted, on several occasions, a distinctly defiant attitude towards him (Sazonoff), with having ascribed to him *arrière-pensées*, and with doubting the sincerity of his statements, etc. Vague reproaches, nothing precise. I again praised up Louis, and assured M. Sazonoff that he was mistaken regarding the sentiments of our Ambassador. I added that as far as I was concerned, I was unwilling to allow misunderstandings of a personal nature to have the slightest effect on the relations between the two allied countries. He replied that he was entirely of my opinion, and added, ' I consider the incident closed. Be so good merely to tell M. Louis to be more frank with me, without letting him know that I have spoken to you on the matter.' "

This memorandum gives exactly the essential features of our conversation. It was not intended for publication, but for record only, and I could not foresee that Briand and Jonnart would find it necessary to replace Louis, nor that successive Ministers of Foreign Affairs would offer him no other post, nor that he would unhappily during the war, live in defeatist circles, and make Judet and even the traitor, Bolo Pasha, his intimate friends, nor that Mgr. Bolo would work up a campaign for his brother's friend, nor that Judet, condemned to exile *in contumaciam* by the Clemenceau Government, would bear me such a grudge for having been acquitted under my Government, nor, lastly, that the Pro-German Committee of Holland and the Hamburg Propaganda Committee would make so much noise about so simple a matter.

There is no discrepancy between Sazonoff's reports and mine. The most that can be said is that two speakers, even if they give a correct version of their conversation,

are always liable to maintain their respective points of view. Sazonoff's report shows that the complaints against our Ambassador came, not from Isvolsky but from Sazonoff himself, and in this document which he drew up for the Emperor, the Minister does nothing to hide the fact that he asked for the recall. Even if the Sovereign had personally made no complaint against our Ambassador, he knew all about, and allowed, those of his Minister. According to Sazonoff's report, these complaints were :

"'In the first instance, during the Italo-Turkish War, the Ambassador not only did not support our efforts to find a means to reconcile the countries at war, but rather, as I was justified in supposing [it is M. Sazonoff who is speaking and he evidently alludes to deciphering], had displayed perpetual mistrust with regard to my activities, and had attributed to me all sorts of warlike proposals with regard to Turkey.' M. Sazonoff categorically admitted that, with regard to this first point, I had sheltered Louis and even explained that he had been the faithful interpreter of the French Government. 'Poincaré', he wrote, 'protests against the first supposition, and gives the assurance that M. G. Louis could not have distrusted my activities, and that if he did not show more sympathy for the efforts which we made with a view to reconcile Italy and Turkey, that was due to special considerations arising out of the position of France in Northern Africa.'"

Sazonoff refers to observations which I made to him with regard to the Italo-Turkish War, as to the excitement amongst the Moslems of Morocco. He was mistaken in attributing to Louis alone an attitude which was our own.

But the Minister had, so he said, another grievance :

"In the second place, Louis transmitted to Paris the essence of my conversations with him in such an inexact manner that, as M. Poincaré himself recalled, misunderstandings often arose which were most undesirable. Several of these were of a kind calculated to put difficulties in the way of successful co-operation. That was all the more regrettable, as in view of our relations as allies, it was of quite special importance that there should exist complete confidence and mutual understanding between us."

If only we had been able to decipher the Russian telegrams,

as Sazonoff was able to decipher ours, how many " Isvolsky " inexactitudes we could have shown up !

Had I known of Sazonoff's report when it was written in August 1912 I must have concluded that after allowing me to hope that the incident was closed, the Minister continued to distrust Louis and so reported to his Emperor. Sazonoff's persistent and personal complaints of Louis showed also how our Ambassador had deceived himself when he denounced to me the underhand manœuvres of Isvolsky and the social machinations of the Grand Duchess Wladimir.

Sazonoff continued to the Emperor:

" With regard to the second reason for dissatisfaction, Poincaré was obliged to admit that Georges Louis had in fact not shown that he possessed the ability to grasp clearly an idea which was communicated to him and to pass it on correctly. He attributed this fault to the poor state of health of the Ambassador and to distressing family matters."

I, of course, could not say to Sazonoff: " This unfortunate misunderstanding was due to the fact that you explained yourself badly ". I was obliged to reply to him: " Louis must have misunderstood you ". I added, in fact, that the errors, or incompleteness, in his reports must be put down to the state of his health, and to the isolation in which, for several months, he had been living at the Embassy. Sazonoff saw, as clearly as I did, that Louis, ill, silent and gloomy as he was, seemed to have lost some of his energy.

" I emphasised," he said, " by the frankness of my explanations, that I did not contemplate working for the immediate recall of Louis, but I was unable to conceal that I considered that his replacement in due course, by a person more suitable to this post, was desirable from the point of view of the relations between the two Governments. M. Poincaré entirely agreed."

As I have reported, Sazonoff clearly told me in our first conversation, as he had told Louis himself, that he considered the incident as closed, and I was justified in thinking that that was his last word. I saw the Minister several times during my stay, and we had the opportunity on several occasions to talk about the relations between the

two countries. He did not renew his complaints against Louis, but he might have told me, although I do not remember it, that a change would be very advisable, as it is mentioned in his report that—

" Later on, it would be better, in all the circumstances, that there should be at the French Embassy a man whose qualities were more suitable to the demands of this post."

I certainly did not reply " Never ". M. Georges Louis was not condemned to serve for ever at St. Petersburg. I thought myself, that given another climate, his chilly nature might perhaps regain its full vitality, and if I had contemplated a reshuffling of diplomatic appointments, I should, doubtless, sooner or later, have offered our Ambassador a suitable post.

M. Sazonoff finished up to the Emperor :

" I have been very glad to have had the opportunity to make the acquaintance of M. Poincaré and to enter into personal relations with him, all the more so as the exchange of views which I have had with him has left me the impression that in him Russia possesses a sure and faithful friend, gifted with political sense quite out of the common, and of iron will. In the event of a crisis arising in international relations, it would be very desirable that our Ally should be led, if not by M. Poincaré himself, at least by a person of the same decision and as fearless of responsibility as the present French Prime Minister."

In reproducing this passage, M. René Marchand, the French publisher of the Black Book, prints it in very large letters for the benefit of those who in 1912 would have liked to see at the head of the French Government a man opposed to Russia and devoid of will-power and political acumen, and incapable of supporting his responsibilities. Poor René Marchand ! I can still see him, when his father, a very estimable magistrate, brother-in-law of Gaston Calmette, brought him to my room, and said to me : " He is leaving for St. Petersburg as correspondent for the *Figaro* ". I recommended him to the Ambassador, and I saw him again at St. Petersburg, pampered by the Ambassador and passionately Czarist in his views. He married in Russia, lost his

nerve over the Revolution, and turned Bolshevist. Perhaps he was more sinned against than sinning.

After leaving the Pont aux Chantres, I proceeded to the "Island" district, where, on Eleguine Island, M. Kokovtzoff and his wife, who were old friends of mine, lived in a charming villa given by the Emperor. My note runs:—

"*Louis 'affaire'*.—Kokovtzoff admitted that we could not recall him without also insisting upon the recall of Isvolsky. Personally, he had never had anything to complain about Louis. The only misunderstanding had been between Sazonoff and Louis himself. He was of opinion that at present it was best to remove neither Isvolsky nor Louis. I spoke to him of Isvolsky's clumsy methods, tittle-tattle, and intrgues with Tittoni.[1]

"I did not conceal from him that at Paris the Russian Ambassador had antagonised the aristocracy, the Republican party, the Press, in short, the entire public opinion. He replied that he considered Isvolsky and his wife snobs, conceited people, and bunglers, and he even gave me to understand that he did not think that Isvolsky was altogether impervious to financial influences. The only complaint that he had to make concerning Louis, was that he was dull, reserved and not sufficiently representative. He said that he did not doubt our policy. 'Unfortunately it was not simply a matter of pursuing it entirely at the Ministries or at the Douma; there were the drawing-rooms, the Court, and quite a number of places where it ought to make itself felt, and an Ambassador ought to get into touch or try to get into touch with such circles; but apart from that, I have nothing to say against Louis, and I am very glad that Sazonoff has told you himself that this question no longer exists.'"

My conversations with Kokovtzoff touched on other subjects of more general interest than those discussed with Sazonoff.

"*Strategic Railways*.—Kokovtzoff informed me that the retracking of the line from Warsaw to the Austrian frontier was already decided upon. He is going to study the question of the

[1] There is no need to go into details, but as the Hamburg Committee tried to falsify the story and has represented me as having sacrificed Louis to the ambition and spite of Isvolsky, I owe it to the credit of my Government to state the truth.

lines running towards the German frontier.[1] I pointed out to him that it is on the German frontier that the war will be decided.[2] I also insisted that certain sections should be doubled and quadrupled, particularly on the lines from Smolensk and Briansk. He was agreeable, but a little annoyed at the suggestion that the Russian General Staff had made use of a subterfuge to obtain the support of France at the Russian Ministry of Finance for proposals it dared not make direct. I said that our own General Staff had pointed out these omissions, which were all the more serious as our mobilisation was to take place more rapidly, and that co-operation during the preliminary efforts of the two countries would thus be jeopardised. M. Kokovtzoff assured me that he quite understood the importance of the question. He would endeavour to settle the matter as soon as possible, but 'within the limits of financial considerations'." (Original, filed as Dossier, France Russia R.A.252.II.)

"*Italo-Turkish War*.—M. Kokovtzoff shared the opinion of M. Sazonoff respecting the desirability of the mission concerning which Bompard had been spoken to, and he hopes that it may be possible to dispatch such a mission to Tripolitania." (Filed as Dossier, Italo-Turkish War, D.37.VI.)

"*Naval Conventions*.—M. Kokovtzoff considers that the naval convention can best be brought about by a diplomatic agreement. He would even like to see the conventions drawn up by the Chiefs of the General Staff, closely controlled by the two Governments. 'These gentlemen', he said, 'are capable of pledging us without due consideration. They talk and they hardly take into consideration the financial side of the question, or even consider the diplomatic phase of it. This time, they discussed Turkey, and heaven knows what. They will finish up by leading us a long way.'" (Filed as Dossier, France Russia, R.A.252.II.)

"*Chinese Affairs*.—M. Kokovtzoff spoke to me bitterly as to the manner in which the French, German, American and English consortium had been constituted; he is convinced that the Quai d'Orsay had determined beforehand to eliminate Russia; he thanked me for having put an end to a state of affairs

[1] These lines were of the same gauge as the lines of Central and Western European railways and did not correspond to the wider gauge of the Russian lines, so that Russian rolling-stock could not be used, and in the event of mobilisation, transfer would become necessary and delay inevitable. On the other hand, German rolling stock could run over them as on a through line. That was a point which was causing anxiety to our General Staff, and which constituted a very grave danger in the event of aggression by Germany.

[2] Such were the actual words of the opinion expressed by General Joffre to General Gillinsky at the last conference.

which he said was deplorable. He spoke even more forcefully to M. Rivet, correspondent of the *Temps*, and made it clear that he considered the French Government, or at least the Administration, had sacrificed the interests of the Alliance to financial influences." (Filed as Dossier, E.36.VII.)

At the Embassy that evening I told the members of our colony, who were introduced by M. Darcy, President of the French Philanthropic Society, how the Government of the Republic looked to them to keep up the pacific friendship between the two countries.

At the dinner in my honour at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, all the Russian Ministers, the *personnel* of the French Ambassador, and high dignitaries of the Court were present, and I felt my first day had been well filled.

CHAPTER XVII

Audience of the Emperor and Empress—Receptions and ceremonies—Visit to Moscow—The French colony—Return to the *Condé*—Landing at Dunkirk.

On the morning of August 11th I left St. Petersburg by special train with Louis, M. Doulcet, Counsellor of the Embassy, and M. Daeschner, for an audience with the Emperor; I had only seen him once, when he came to Paris in 1896; he seemed then to be very simple and rather shy, but as Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies I had only exchanged a few insignificant words with him. Louis and Doulcet spoke highly of his frankness and intelligence; the Empress appeared more enigmatical, and already strange rumours were being circulated about her and her entourage. On February 14/27, 1912, M. Menchikoff had published in the *Novoie Vremya* an article which had created a scandal, and talked of a Siberian moujik in regard to whom doubtful reports ran—" a peasant, forty years old, gnarled and ugly, with spare features and a wine-sodden face ". In short, the editor of the *Novoie Vremya* had attributed the fall of Mgr. Hermogene, Bishop of Saratoff, to the rancour of Gryscha Rasputin, whom the Bishop had prevented from becoming a priest, and who, to secure his revenge, had exploited his influence in high places. Menchikoff's campaign had extended to several newspapers; and there had been an interpellation in the Duma. M. Goutchkoff, the friend of Stolypin, had asked the Holy Synod to defend " the sanctuary of the altar and of the throne against an adventurer ". Some cracks had already shown themselves in the Empire, but the edifice still stood stately and imposing: what about the Sovereigns who held sway over it?

In three-quarters of an hour we arrived at Peterhof station, whence we were conducted through a park very French in appearance, to a palace of pretentious proportions, in the distance not unlike Versailles; there was scarcely time to take in its beauties when a victoria, with a pair of prancing horses, drew up before the great door of the palace, from which the Emperor and Empress alighted, having come from the Villa Alexandria, where they lived very modestly, about a mile and a quarter away. Nicholas, bronzed by his cruise (in the course of which he had met the Kaiser), was wearing the uniform of colonel of the Preobrajensky regiment: the Empress was rather sombrely dressed, her severe face relieved by a large feather-trimmed hat. The Master of Ceremonies led me from room to room until we came to the private apartments of the Emperor where he and the Empress, standing side by side, awaited me. The audience lasted nearly half an hour, but they never suggested I should take a seat, nor did they themselves sit down. Two years later, as President of the Republic I was received differently, but now etiquette was strictly observed, though the Emperor was entirely gracious. He asked after M. Fallières, and what the Government of the Republic thought and desired as to the great questions of the day. The Empress remained motionless and impassive, but now and again she showed approval of the Emperor's words by nodding her head or by brief and very discreet remarks. From time to time a sudden colour came into her cheeks as if she had a spasm in her heart or some difficulty in breathing.

I made a note of the essential points of this conversation.[1]

"*Audience of the Emperor. Chinese Question.*—The Emperor thanked me for having paved the way for Russia to join the Consortium. 'It was of the utmost importance to us', he said.

"*Naval Convention.*—The Emperor gladly agreed to the idea of an exchange of notes between M. Sazonoff and me; the Convention should be ratified by the two Governments and should constitute a diplomatic agreement in the same way as the alliance and the military convention. The Emperor spoke of the alliance in a very categorical tone, as a matter not disputed and not disputable.

[1] Original filed in the Quai d'Orsay, Franco-Russian dossier, R.A.252.II.

"*Strategic Railways.*—I pointed out to him the importance of the improvements requested by our Staff; he thought this very interesting and remembered having already discussed a similar matter with M. Delcassé. He would not lose sight of it, and suggested that I should talk it over with M. Kokovtzoff, whom it concerned more particularly, and with whom he would discuss it himself.

"*Italo-Turkish War.*—The Emperor was much impressed by the suggestion relative to the dispatch of a mission to Tripolitania. 'It is the first favourable sign', he said; 'this opportunity must be seized'.

"*The Louis Question.*—The Emperor had nothing against Louis, whom I praised highly. 'It would be deplorable', he said, 'if this incident should have any consequences. In any case, it can have no influence on the relations between the two Governments.'

"*Various Questions.*—The Emperor told me spontaneously that he followed with much interest what he called the military and national awakening of France. He considered it absurd that, in this connection, people should talk of our chauvinism. A nation, in order to be strong, must have a military spirit. He was delighted with the state of mind he saw existent in France; he congratulated the French Government on cherishing and developing it. I explained our attitude in the Italo-Turkish War. He did not conceal that M. Sazonoff had found us lukewarm towards Italy, but quite understood our special position, and fully realised that it would have been useless for us to compromise ourselves at Constantinople by hasty action when Germany would not be a party to it. 'She would have watched us at work', he said, 'and have tried to take the profit for herself'. The Emperor left me convinced of his absolute loyalty to the alliance."

I did not, of course, address the Emperor as from Head of State to Head of State but had to listen deferentially without interrupting; moreover, time pressed and guests had already arrived for luncheon. All that the Government wanted from this conversation was my idea as to the Emperor's attachment to the alliance, and here I received full satisfaction.[1]

[1] William II., in his *Tableaux d'histoire*, writes: "Poincaré's visit to St. Petersburg. He promises the Czar three years' military service." It would be just as accurate to pretend that, at Port Baltic, Nicholas II. had promised the Kaiser to disarm France. The Czar did not say a single word to me, nor I to him, about military service.

The Empress withdrew to rejoin the children at the Villa Alexandria, and I went into the next room, where, standing in a circle, were the people invited to luncheon, amongst them Princesses Narishkin and Obolensky, maids of honour to the Empress. A few minutes later the Emperor joined us, and, following behind him, we repaired to a sort of buffet, where *hors-d'œuvres* were served. The Emperor offered me caviar and a small glass of strong spirits, which etiquette forbade me to refuse, and he also handed me, what I much preferred, the Grand Cordon of Alexander Nevsky in a magnificent crimson case.

At luncheon, in the Peter the Great hall, Louis and I were on each side of the Emperor, and opposite were General Friederikcz, Kokovtzoff and Sazonoff ; Commander Carré and two officers of the *Condé* had also been invited. The Emperor asked me particularly about Briand, Léon Bourgeois and Millerand, and spoke much of Delcassé, whom he knew. Over coffee, served on the grand balcony overlooking the upper gardens, the Czar chatted with his guests, especially with Daeschner and the French officers, and then left us, to return to the Villa Alexandria.

About half-past five a special train took us to the huge military camp at Krasnoie Selo, whither the Emperor had gone by motor-car. He alighted from his car at the entrance of the camp, mounted a superb chestnut, and began the inspection of the troops. He was followed by the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaievitch, Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Armies, brisk and alert, as thin as a skeleton, and as tall as an American sky-scraper, but looking all over a " leader of men ". Behind him rode the Grand Duke Serge Michailovitch, the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovitch, and a bevy of staff officers. The Emperor passed slowly along the front of the divisions, which were drawn up in two ranks before the long line of their grey tents. On coming to the head of each unit, he looked down the ranks of soldiers and shouted " Hail, brothers ", the men replying with the usual sonorous but rather mechanical hurrahs. The whole thing was a little boresome, the more so as the news filtering in from the Balkans was far from good.

Serbia was apparently disturbed by Austria-Hungary being busy in Bosnia-Herzegovina and near the Sanjak of Novi-Bazar.[1] Two bombs had been thrown by Bulgarian komitadjis in the market-place of Kochani, and the Turkish police had immediately rounded up a large number of young men, who had been bayoneted. A state of siege had been proclaimed at Salonica, and Montenegro was complaining of frontier incidents with Turkey, and begging the Powers to intervene. Kokovtzoff, Sazonoff, Louis Daeschner and I asked each other how on earth we were going to allay this growing agitation. Near us, the arm-chair reserved for the Empress remained unoccupied; she had been seized with sudden indisposition and was unable to come to the review.

Having finished his round, the Emperor dismounted in front of his tent, and the German Military Attaché presented three officers recently promoted in the German regiment of which he was honorary colonel; they had come specially to offer their homage to the Russian sovereign, an item purposely added to the day's programme, as a postscript to the interview at Port Baltic, and a token of esteem for William. Twenty-five military bands, comprising two thousand musicians, then played a series of selections until nightfall. Suddenly there was a great silence. The massed bands played the evening prayer, and with the first bars the sixty thousand soldiers bared their heads; on this motionless army the setting sun cast its parting rays.

Before he withdrew to his châlet at Krasnoie Selo the Czar addressed a few friendly words to the Commander and officers of the *Condé*.

I was invited to dinner that evening by the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaievitch and the Grand Duchess Anastasia, in their pavilion, in the middle of this encampment. The tables were laid in a tent in the garden, and the Grand Duchess, a Princess of Montenegro, did the honours to perfection. After dinner came a theatrical performance for the senior officers. The Emperor sat in the first row of the orchestra stalls with his brother on his right, the

[1] Yellow Book on Balkan Affairs, No. 47.

Grand Duke Nicholas on his left, and the other Grand Dukes behind. A comedy in three acts, the words of which I could not guess, and the gestures of which I could scarcely understand, was played with much animation and evidently with great success. The second part of the performance consisted of entertainments and dances in which artistes of the Imperial *corps de ballet* were prominent. I noticed particularly one dancer, light as a feather, who, every time she came on to the stage, piously made the sign of the cross before she commenced her pirouetting. Through a wakeful night, in the châlet where a room had been reserved for me, I fretted myself over the Kochani massacres.

The military demonstrations were not yet ended: an inspection on Sunday evening was followed by a review on Monday morning, when the "march past" was really fine, though most of the flags were in rags, as they were only renewed every hundred years. After the review came luncheon in the Imperial tent, where I was invited to the Emperor's table, which was separate from the others, and laid for about ten people. Nicholas II. had again on his right hand the Grand Duke Michael, who was as silent and gloomy as the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaievitch was quick and merry. Old General Friederickz was opposite the Emperor, with Louis and myself on either side of him, the Russian Ministers and Generals being at other tables. Conversation was not very general and rather "whispery", every one exchanging a few discreet words with his neighbours, and the Emperor trying to hold the balance between the chatter of the Commander-in-Chief and the stiff-as-a-poker reserve of the Grand Duke Michael. After luncheon, I took final leave of the Sovereign, and returned to St. Petersburg for another interview with Sazonoff.

The next morning I received the Japanese Ambassador, M. Motono, of whose active sympathy with England and France I was aware, as of his tact in effacing the last remnants of misunderstanding between Japan and Russia.

A private luncheon, offered by the St. Petersburg Academy of Science, was followed by a kindly visit from the British Ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, after which Louis

accompanied me to Tsarkoie Selo, where we were invited to tea by the Grand Duchess Vladimir, whom Louis had suspected of intriguing with Isvolsky against him; over the tea-cups he now perhaps realised his mistake.

In the evening the French Ambassador gave a big dinner at St. Petersburg, which was attended by the Russian Ministers, M. Isvolsky, the British Ambassador and members of the French colony, and at eleven o'clock I left for Moscow with Daeschner. Louis pleaded fatigue and indisposition for not being able to accompany us, and one had only to look at him to be sure that he was telling the truth.

M. Judet thought fit to say, after the lapse of thirteen years, that Louis did not want to go to Moscow and disapproved of the visit because Isvolsky had decided to go. For the last four days Louis had scarcely left Isvolsky, and there was no breath of trouble between them, but Louis thought that by going to Moscow I might seem to be imitating Bethmann-Hollweg, and also that my visit, coinciding with the centenary of 1812, might give rise to some inconvenience. I confess that the temptation to visit the Holy Town was strong; I knew our colony there was much more important than at St. Petersburg, and as the centenary of 1812 was not to be celebrated until September, one need not fear any unpleasantness, the festivities having been prepared in a manner which left nothing to grate on French susceptibilities. The Emperor had promised to come to Borodino to unveil the French monument erected in memory of the dead of the Grand Army. General de Torcy was appointed to represent the French Association of Remembrance at the ceremony, while an official delegation, headed by General de Langle de Cary, was to proceed to Russia. The two allied nations rendered common homage to the soldiers who had in days gone by fought against each other; not a word was said which could have offended any one; General de Torcy and General de Langle de Cary thanked the Emperor, and, according to the newspapers, the Russian Government, to add lustre to the celebrations, produced a serjeant-major a hundred and

twenty-two years old and several others only a few years his junior, who had witnessed the burning of Moscow.

On arriving at Moscow on Wednesday 14th August, at ten o'clock in the morning, I was received by General Djounkowsky, the Governor, M. Nicholas Goutchkoff, the Mayor of the town and brother of the leader of the Octobrist party, M. Girard and several members of the French colony, and at the very grim and gloomy palace where the Duke Serge was assassinated in 1905, rooms had been reserved for me. With a few other guests, I lunched with General Djounkowsky, who toasted my Government, and, after the inevitable caviar, made me taste the famous Muscovite dish, *cochon de lait à la crème*. After this the Governor, Prefect and Mayor took me by motor-car to the Mountain of Birds to show me that panorama of the town and the valley of the Moskva which Napoleon had contemplated; of Napoleon, I noted, they spoke with far more admiration than resentment.

We then came, by infamous roads, to the factory which supplied Moscow daily with a hundred thousand cubic metres of filtered water, then run by a French company, and thence to M. Nicholas Goutchkoff's country house, where, after tea, a priest said prayers before an ikon for my health and prosperity. Mme. Goutchkoff confided to me that since the last troubles in Moscow the workmen and even the peasantry did not seem to her the same, that hatred seemed in the air, and that, in the evening, she trembled when her husband, after finishing his work at the Town Hall, came back alone.

That evening a hundred and fifty of my compatriots gave me an excellent dinner and an enthusiastic reception, so enthusiastic that there was a lump in my throat when I got up to thank them.[1]

[1] " When your appeal reached me in Paris ", I said, " I realised that if I could not come as far as Moscow I would be inflicting a slight on your patriotism and depriving myself of a great pleasure. If it is indeed a satisfaction for you, who live and work far from France, to receive from the Government of the Republic a direct testimony of solicitude and sympathy; it is a great but too rare good fortune for the Government itself to see at work in so vast and fertile a field, enterprising men who have brought their assiduous energies and their creative ingenuity to the country of a friendly

Thunders of applause when I handed the cross to M. Paul Girard. I was then taken to a suburban theatre, where all the families of the colony awaited me, and where I was hailed as the messenger from home and regaled with Russian choruses and Czigany songs.

The next day, after an exhaustive—and for poor Isvolsky a very exhausting—inspection of the Kremlin, I had luncheon with the Prefect and visited the 1812 Museum, where, under the able direction of my compatriot Baron de Baye, several tables had been instituted in honour of Napoleon I., and where there was a collection of arms, old uniforms, antique standards and venerable eagles. I was back at St. Petersburg that evening to hear of things humming in the Near East. Bompard telegraphed that the Bulgarian Minister and the Montenegrin Chargé d'Affaires at Constantinople reported shots being fired uninterruptedly on the Montenegrin frontier, and that the Ottoman Government seemed impotent to deal with its subjects. In Bulgaria the turmoil had penetrated into the most pacific circles, and the Guéchoff Cabinet was not proof against it.

On 14th August Briand was told by Count Somssich, the charming Austro-Hungarian Chargé d'Affaires,[1] that the situation in the Balkans was causing the Austrian Government grave anxiety, and that the Bulgarians, Serbs and Greeks feared the Turkish Government would give Albania privileges incompatible with their own national interests. The Vienna Cabinet, he said, would be glad to learn whether the Great Powers would be disposed to discuss (1) whether

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nation." And I added: "A century has passed since the Grand Army, in this region, measured its strength against the noble sons of the Russian nation, and so many examples of courage, endurance and self-sacrifice were given by both sides, for the admiration of posterity. In this imposing epopee which will afford the two friendly peoples the opportunity of joining in honouring the glorious dead, France and Russia can only find fresh grounds for reciprocal respect and esteem. In associating yourselves with the festivities which are in course of preparation, you will only be yielding to your immutable sentiments. Loyally attached to your mother country, you bear at the same time an affection for Russia which every day is strengthened still more by acquaintance with the country and by mingling with the inhabitants. In you, the minds of the two countries come closer together in a symbolical intimacy."

[1] Yellow Book, No. 50.

to advise the Porte to adopt a policy of progressive decentralisation, which would procure for the Christian nationalities the guarantees which they can legitimately claim; (2) action with the Balkan States, which would induce them to await quietly the results of this policy.

Briand simply said that we would carefully look into Count Berchtold's suggestion, and that we were glad to find ourselves at one with Austria as to the Near East.

Berchtold's idea was not new, but as old as the Congress of Berlin; nor was it very precise. But it emanated from Austria, and perhaps furnished an opportunity—which we must not let slip—of bringing the Dual Monarchy and Russia together as to the Near East. In conversation with Sazonoff on 16th August, I strongly supported Briand's decision, which had been telegraphed to me at the Embassy. Whatever happened, Berchtold was anyhow placing himself, as diplomats would say, "on European ground". Here was a fact which was not without importance, and which might be a harbinger of peace.

Sazonoff rather regretted that a Russian proposal which he was considering had not been sent to the Powers first, and he feared some *arrière-pensée* on the part of Austria. He was afraid that she was trying to dominate the Balkan races, and the words "progressive decentralisation" struck him as very vague; Berchtold was perhaps only expressing a platonic wish. But the fact still remained that Austria offered to discuss matters, and I telegraphed to Briand that Sazonoff and I agreed to the proposal.

Sazonoff wanted representations at Constantinople to be individual and simultaneous rather than collective—which was also England's idea—but this in no way traversed Berchtold's communication. Russia's adherence, like ours, was thus complete and absolute, and on 17th August Briand telegraphed to London in the same terms as I had used.[1]

The question now was would all the Powers welcome the Austrian suggestion as favourably as France? Germany was a little cold. On 15th August our Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin telegraphed:

[1] Yellow Book, No. 52.

" The evening papers, although approving Count Berchtold's proposal, are sceptical as to what results it may have. Statements made to the Press Bureau give the impression that the Austrian *démarche* took the German Government by surprise and that they are not altogether pleased with it."

This time we were certainly far more responsive to Austria than was her great ally.[1]

In London, Sir Louis Mallet, who was deputising for Sir Edward, told M. de Fleuriau that " the British Government would assist the Ottoman Government, but thought it dangerous to give this assistance in the form of advice ".

At Constantinople the Austrian proposals seemed to be greatly distrusted, and the Counsellor of the Turkish Embassy at Berlin said " Only one Power, Austria, is troubling us at the present moment. If she keeps quiet, the Balkan States will not budge ; a movement, and they may be on the rampage."

In the meantime, at Vienna, Dumaine had again seen Berchtold, who was off to Ischl, and was again assured that the proposal was inspired by a desire to preserve peace, and encouragement would be given to Montenegro to secure a rectification of her frontier. When Dumaine objected that this favour would most certainly arouse the covetousness of the other Balkan States, Berchtold retorted that the Porte itself admitted the Montenegrin claims and only asked for

[1] It is not easy to understand how M. Fabre-Luce, who was able to read the Yellow Book before the publication of his diplomatic novel, ventured to write : " When on 14th August Austria, in order to prevent the imminent war, suggested a double preventive action, with the Balkan States and with Turkey, Poincaré, who was at St. Petersburg, allowed Sazonoff to take exception to the first proposal ". There is not a word of truth in this statement, which is belied by official documents ; but what aggravates the calumny of Fabre-Luce's allegation is that he feigns to rely on the very Yellow Book which he ignored ; and after the words, " take exception to the first proposal ", he has the temerity to write the note, " Yellow Book on Balkan Affairs, 66 ". I have just quoted textually from the Yellow Book. It literally says the contrary to what M. Fabre-Luce makes it say. I may add that the passages to which I refer appear on page 35, under Nos. 51 and 52, and that neither in No. 66 nor on page 66 is there any mention of the subject with which M. Fabre-Luce pretends to deal. Whether M. Fabre-Luce is demented, or whether he thinks his readers are, is a problem which I refrain from attempting to solve ; but it is painful to think that such ill-considered and frivolous works go to provide food for German propaganda abroad.

time in order to satisfy them. For the rest, he only hoped that the Great Powers would "severally exert themselves to recommend at Constantinople a policy of decentralisation, while avoiding the earlier mistake of defining the nature of the reforms". Dumaine concluded: "Altogether Berchtold's suggestions remain very vague. He acknowledges that the replies of the Governments consulted will be useful to him in deciding on his line of action."

While we laboured for peace, bombs continued to be discovered in the region of Kuprulu, and the Albanians were assembling in the Sanjaks of Elbasan and Dibra.

Before leaving St. Petersburg, Sazonoff and I drafted a *communiqué* which wound up with: "The Ministers again recognised that the entente between the two friendly and allied countries, based on permanent interests, perpetuated by invariable sentiments, and progressively adapted to all the necessities against which an alliance must provide, is, and remains, a precious guarantee for the maintenance of peace and of European equilibrium".

I then went on board the yacht *Neva*, alongside the Nicholas quay, to rejoin the *Condé*, anchored at Kronstadt. I was received by Admiral Grigerovitch, Sazonoff and General Soukhomlinoff, Minister of War, of whom the Emperor had said to me: "He is not much to look at, but he is all right". He was not much to look at, and I had yet to find out whether he was all right or not. On the *Condé* I was to give luncheon to the Russian Ministers, and I got on board before them, so as to have the Russian colours hoisted. They followed in vedette boats and cutters. Kokovtzoff was the last to arrive, and expressed the good wishes of Nicholas II. for the President of the Republic and the French Government.

The crew of the *Condé* had erected a large tent on the afterdeck of the vessel and decorated it most delightfully. Between guns and piles of arms were hung white draperies crossed with tricolour bands; red and white roses adorned the tables. There were no speeches; I just proposed the health of the Emperor and the Imperial Family, and Kokovtzoff asked us to raise our glasses in honour of the

President of the Republic and to the prosperity of France. After the Russian national anthem and the *Marseillaise* my guests were conducted over the *Condé*, and then, with Louis and Isvolsky, returned to the *Neva*, which ran up the French flag, signalled "*Bon voyage*", and disappeared in a rising fog. The *Condé* gave a salute of nineteen guns, the *Aurora* replied, and our cruiser got under weigh and made for France; we had scarcely covered a few miles of the Gulf of Finland when martial law was proclaimed in Kronstadt, as mutiny was feared amongst the crews of the fleet.

I passed my time on the homeward journey reading, talking to Daeschner, and picking up useful information from the officers and sailors.

On the evening of the 20th August we were off Dunkirk, and boarding a torpedo-boat the following day, I met Steeg, who brought me thanks and congratulations from the Government, and among other papers a telegram from Louis which testified to there being no parting of the ways between the Ambassador and myself. I was received by the mayor, senators and deputies, and taken to the Town Hall, where, after luncheon, I made a short speech, with special mention of our sailors, and appreciation of the welcome which the Russian Government had accorded to the envoy of the Government of the Republic: "Russia and France are equally interested in the solidarity of the alliance, which allows them daily to concert diplomatic action, to co-operate in their efforts to keep peace, and at the same time to follow attentively events as they occur, thus protecting themselves by a mutual agreement against any future dangers. This union is completed and enlarged by our cordial understanding with England, and surely no one can see anything provocative and aggressive in this peaceful grouping of three friendly powers."

That was what the inhabitants of Dunkirk, to judge from their demonstration, quite evidently understood by the Triple Entente. At the railway station in Paris the Ministers were awaiting me on the platform, and outside, the people voiced their confidence in their Government in a way which I certainly had not noticed in Russia.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Near East—Anxiety in Europe—Result of the first Berchtold proposal—Turkish opposition—British scruples—Visit to Longwy—Second Berchtold proposal.

M. BRIAND had sent by wireless to the *Condé* the gist of all his information to hand, and the day after my return (the 22nd August), at a council of Ministers held at Rambouillet —where the President was staying—I submitted a detailed account of my mission.

We heard that the pretender El Heiba had just then entered Marakech and fresh reinforcements had to be sent. A sparsely-attended congress of syndicalists had been held at Cherbourg a few days before and had approved a work entitled the *Sou du Soldat*, which threatened the discipline of the army, and the Council unanimously decided that the syndicates should be asked to dissolve.

External questions were, however, the chief claim on us, and in no chancellery was Count Berchtold's proposal favoured as we had hoped for, the Italian Government mistrusting the Austrian initiative.[1]

The Russian Chargé d'Affaires, M. Sevastopoulo, presented a note at the Quai d'Orsay on 19th August stating that Bulgaria and Serbia, stung by Turkey having given certain privileges to the insurgent Albanians, demanded similar rights on behalf of the people of their race in Macedonia. So long as their neighbours were unhappy, their own misfortunes had seemed tolerable, but with a change in Albania's fortunes, Serbia and Bulgaria found their lot doubly hard.

The Russian Government thought that the Powers could

[1] Telegram of 19th August.

converse with Constantinople as to the Serbian and Bulgarian demands without prejudice to Berchtold's project.[1]

When Bompard informed us of the current talk in Turkey, we were put on our guard against the consequences of the Austrian proposal. Ottoman subjects of Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek race considered the grant of special privileges to the Albanians incompatible with their own national interests, and Bompard said that Count Berchtold's scheme would lead to "racial conflict and the disintegration of Turkey in Europe", and "if the Austrian Minister persisted with his proposal, he should be asked to define his intentions; for, as soon as he dispensed with vague formulas and put his views into concrete form, the impossibility of entertaining his suggestions without imperilling the peace of the Orient, and destroying the *status quo* of the Balkans, would be apparent to every one, even to himself".[2]

Only at Vienna and Sofia was there now any optimism. Francis Joseph had conferred the collar of the Golden Fleece on Berchtold as a sign of his sovereign approval, and the crafty Ferdinand was very vocal in his approval of the Austrian proposal.

The French Ambassador at Vienna considered that Berchtold ought to have a careful hearing so as not to lay ourselves open to the reproach that we had prejudiced his project.[3] He was right, but a clamorous campaign had been cunningly organised respecting the Austrian *démarche*, and Bompard was emphatic that all this bluster betrayed a Viennese manœuvre, and that the Austro-Hungarian Government had a more selfish aim in view than the pacification of the Balkans. He surmised that they wanted to form new relations with the Christian populations of the Peninsula and at the same time to hold hands with their Albanian clientele. Bompard rightly said that Berchtold should state precisely his proposals. According to M. de Manneville, the German Government was surprised and doubtful as to whether Count Berchtold's proposal, and

[1] Russian note of 19th August.
[2] Telegram from Constantinople, 17th August, Yellow Book, No. 55.
[3] Telegram from Vienna, 17th August, Yellow Book, No. 56.

especially its publicity, was altogether opportune, but they would observe what they called their duty as allies.[1]

In the midst of all this fog and fuss, one thing only was certain, namely, my agreement with Sazonoff in regard to Berchtold's scheme. Briand had forwarded my telegram to the British Government, who, according to M. de Fleuriau, seemed languid about taking a hand in the game.[2] Sir Edward had telegraphed from Fallodon to Sir Louis Mallet that the Powers, while desirous of reforms in Turkey, ought to avoid giving their advice in such a form that it might arouse the susceptibilities of Turkish opinion and of the Turkish army. Sir Arthur Nicolson thought this precaution the more necessary as Tewfik Pasha had declared that "the Austrian suggestion, if put into operation, would prejudice the authority of the Turkish Government instead of consolidating it".

In Albania things were going from bad to worse; the rebels shifted their headquarters from Prishtina to Uskub and were already heading for Kuprulu. The Constantinople Government assumed an air of indifference; they offered the Albanians thirty-five thousand rifles to secure the evacuation of Uskub, but they decided on vigorous action against the Montenegrins. They parleyed with the strong but proposed to crush the weak.

Sazonoff had notified the Austrian Ambassador that as Berchtold's suggestion tended towards the maintenance of the *status quo* and peace in the Balkans, the Russian Government willingly agreed to it, and Count de Thurn had promised M. Neratoff fresh details as to the views of his Government.

There was indeed need for fresh details. In mid-August most of the European Ministers were on holiday; England was not disposed for immediate intervention.[3]

Berchtold seemed in no hurry to elucidate his scheme, and Dumaine thought "he would be guided by the replies he received";[4] he was going to Hungary and

[1] Telegram from de Manneville, 17th August 1912. Yellow Book, No. 54.
[2] Yellow Book, No. 53.
[3] Dispatch from M. de Fleuriau, 21st August.
[4] Yellow Book, No. 63.

Roumania and, with the help of a secretary, would "follow developments"—the airy indifference of an official who starts a conversation and, to the confusion of his listeners, stops in the middle of it.

Austria had, however, taken the first step; I thought we should take the second. I telegraphed to Dumaine, setting out what I had agreed upon with Sir Edward: "You may inform Count Berchtold that as the Ottoman Government appear to have decided of their own accord to grant certain privileges to the Albanians, the French Government would be willing to advise them to make corresponding or similar concessions to the Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks, but that France cannot take upon herself the *onus* of instigating any modification of the *status quo* in the Balkans. With this reservation, we are quite prepared to exchange views with the Imperial Government on the subject of the régime of decentralisation of which Count Berchtold has spoken. It is understood, of course, that we would concert with Russia and Great Britain in regard to any steps which might be necessary were a definite proposal made." How could we show more clearly our desire to discuss matters with Austria and to keep out of any risky ventures?

To escape from Berchtold's vague generalities I asked Bompard what the Albanian claims exactly were, and he sent me (23rd August) a complete list of what claims had been admitted by the Ottoman Government; the insurgents were apparently satisfied with the concessions granted to them, but the Macedonians were more and more fretfully demanding similar privileges.

As Berchtold was away Dumaine communicated my reply to Baron Macchio and was told that "as soon as the assent of all the Governments consulted has been received, Count Berchtold will continue the exchange of views".

"He will", wrote Dumaine, "furnish explanations and possibly make proposals, in regard to which I have obtained no information whatsoever. It would appear that the Minister will proceed with the utmost circumspection and will avoid anything which might savour of interference in

the domestic affairs of Turkey". A one-sided exchange of views, in which we were never given any views in exchange.

In spite of Berchtold's retrograde movement I hoped that Europe would agree so that the Powers could speak with Constantinople. Bompard was to hint delicately to the Porte our hope that the privileges granted to the Albanians would be shared by the Christian peoples of the Balkans, and I asked the British Government to do the same thing.

Rifaat Pasha was intelligent, conciliatory, and well informed on European affairs, so I begged him to let me know what reforms the Albanians were to enjoy, and the list he promptly supplied was to confirm Bompard's reckoning.

I now tried to get three days' rest at home, but this was broken by our Minister telling me that Berchtold was at Sinaia with the King of Roumania, and that the Viennese Press made a good deal of the visit.[1] The attitude of Roumania was, however, somewhat enigmatical; she was Austria's ally, and she watched closely the movement of a Balkan eyelash. The Italians were evacuating Sidi Said in Tripolitania, and the official emissaries of the Porte and Italy had resumed their conversations in Switzerland. Unrest in Samos compelled us to send the *Bruix*, which was in Canea harbour, to co-operate with an English cruiser in maintaining order. Morocco looked serious as the result of El Heiba's truculence, and we must send reinforcements there. At Constantinople the Grand Vizier told the Austrian Ambassador that Berchtold's proposal was unacceptable, and the Ottoman Government resented a so-called interference in their internal affairs. They did say, however, they would give the people of Roumelia, without distinction of race or religion, the scholastic and linguistic liberties granted to the Albanians, but it must not be understood that their hands had been forced. Bompard, with my approval, said that the Porte would avoid any appearance of having yielded to external influences if the Turks would only declare their intentions and put them quickly into effect.[2] Our Ambassador at Madrid, who was in Paris, dwelt on

[1] Yellow Book, No. 71.

[2] From Therapia, 27th August.

our difficulties with Spain, and important happenings seemed to be occurring in all quarters and all at once.

Sazonoff on his return to St. Petersburg was worried by the report of a conversation between the Austrian Ambassador at Constantinople and the Grand Vizier; at any moment there might be a rupture between Turkey and Montenegro. Mukhtar Pasha had informed Marquis Pallavicini that unless Montenegro demobilised, the Ottoman Government would present them with an ultimatum. The Russian Minister was for the Powers acting together at Cettinje and Constantinople to secure the prompt withdrawal of the troops massed on each side of the frontier.[1] Louis asked him whether Austria was aware of the Serbo-Bulgarian agreements. "I don't know," the Minister replied; "no allusion has been made to them in conversations with our people at Vienna or Berlin, but last spring, when King Ferdinand was at Berlin, M. de Kiderlen said to him point blank, 'You have come to terms with the Serbs at last, then, and not without a lot of trouble'. The King pretended not to hear, and did not reply. He had an impression that perhaps M. de Kiderlen only suspected what he affirmed." That was the version which Ferdinand gave the Russian Government at the time when he borrowed three million roubles from them. It may or may not be true, and possibly Ferdinand had betrayed the lenders at Berlin, but anyhow, Sazonoff now realised the peril of the Balkan agreements and wanted Russia and France to agree on joint action.

I immediately told Louis that I was one with Sazonoff as to the necessity for imposing quiet at Sofia, and I informed the Bulgarian Government that as things stood our bankers could not issue the loan, which must be postponed; at Constantinople and Cettinje we demanded the withdrawal of troops from the Montenegrin frontier zone.[2]

Louis telegraphed to me: "One wonders whether Count Berchtold, in putting forward his proposal, had not an eye to making a conference necessary. When I mentioned such

[1] Yellow Book, 28th August 1912, No. 73.
[2] Yellow Book, Nos. 75, 76, 77, 78.

a conference to M. Sazonoff, he said: 'If we ascertain that Austria is preparing to suggest the convocation of a European conference, I will ask the French Government to forestall them. It would be to Russia's interest that the initiative should be taken by a friendly Government.'" I immediately answered that I was at the disposal of the Russian Government to go into all eventualities with them, that the multiplicity of questions raised might necessitate a conference, and that I would sound the British Government on the subject.[1] If harmony in Europe could issue from a general conference, France and the Triple Entente must not shirk such any effort to bring it about.

Louis warned me, however, on 29th August, that the Turkish Ambassador had told Sazonoff, as Gabriel Effendi had told Bompard, that Berchtold's plan would not do. The Bulgarian Minister at Rome, who had been active in the Balkan agreements, drew for our Chargé d'Affaires a gloomy picture of the ferment in Bulgaria: feelings had risen to such a pitch that if Ferdinand resisted, his life might be in danger! M. Rizoff, who knew his Sovereign well, added without a vestige of a smile: "That will be enough to make him give way". He thought the only alternatives were "the autonomy or the anatomy of Macedonia"; the Bulgarians were persuaded that the Russian Government would be swept along by the tide of popular feeling when Russia knew that their fellow Slavs had attacked the Turks. M. Rizoff rejoiced in the thought, and believed time must be seized by the forelock.[2]

Fortunately England had, like us, intervened at Sofia, though still anxious to avoid any appearance of interfering unwisely in Turkish affairs.

It seemed as if every country was talking at once on the same telephone wire. De Panafieu informed us that he had made the required representations at Sofia, with the reply: "We are determined to maintain a pacific attitude to the end; but if the Italian-Turkish war were to end in the near future without any satisfaction being given to the

[1] Yellow Book, No. 74.
[2] Telegram from M. Laroche, 30th August 1912.

Christians of Macedonia, we might be powerless to restrain the impatience of the public and of the army ".[1]

On 30th August M. Sevastopoulo presented me with a note which drew attention to uneasiness rife in Bulgaria. " The Christian populations of Turkey ", it ran, " have gained the impression that Europe has no interest in them and is abandoning them to their fate, and they might easily be driven to resort to acts of terrorism. Such a state of affairs appears to M. Sazonoff to demand that measures be taken to lead the Balkan States and the Christians of the Peninsula to hope for some amelioration of their lot."

Louis telegraphed :

" Sazonoff at the same time informed me that he did not desire a conference should be held, and indeed was strongly averse from such a course, as it might create greater difficulties than we already have. He considered that the proposal should only be made if it became certain that Austria had decided to put the suggestion forward and if a conference was inevitable."

Yet, if Turkey did not spontaneously introduce the reforms which we had demanded and which she had promised, how could the lot of the Balkan peoples be improved without a conference ? And how, in view of the Balkan agreements, could the territorial *status quo* be preserved if their lot was not improved ? Every day the problem waxed more complex, and its solution became more uncertain.

Meanwhile, Berchtold had seen his Emperor at Ischl, and on 31st August Dumaine reported fresh proposals for the near future from Austria to the Governments which had agreed to " exchange views " with her.[2] This was to the good, and I telegraphed to the Ambassador that I would gladly explain anything fresh in consultation with England and Russia, and that " the French Government, being staunch adherents of the Triple Entente, cannot pursue any object of exclusive interest in the Near East ; the co-operation of all the Powers appears to be necessary in solving the Balkan problem ".[3]

[1] M. de Panafieu, 30th August.
[2] Telegram from M. Dumaine, 31st August.
[3] Yellow Book, No. 88.

My telegram to Vienna was wholly approved by the British Government; Sir Edward agreed with us that collaboration amongst all the Powers was essential. He thought no conference could be called before the end of the Italian-Turkish war, and that even after peace had been made, any conference should be confined to a programme decided upon in advance.[1]

On 3rd September I saw the Austro-Hungarian Chargé d'Affaires; our conversation is preserved in the Ministry's archives:

"Count Berchtold is gratified by the reception of his first overtures. He states that as the Albanians have secured the concessions on fourteen points promised by the Turkish Government, the condition specified by the French Government is fulfilled, and that it will now be possible to demand the same privileges for other nationalities. He adds that, without having recourse to joint representations, the Turkish [Government might be advised to guarantee freedom of elections in the Balkans and equitable representation of the various nationalities. He points out that it would have been much easier to allay the feelings provoked by the Kotchana affair if an interpellation could have been made in the Turkish Parliament in regard to the incident.

"I replied (1) that in regard to the analogous concessions to be made to other nationalities, we had already given the necessary advice and that the Turkish Government had announced their willingness to grant them; (2) that as regards freedom of elections, the advice might be given, but it would have to be given with the utmost discretion and without any interference in Turkish politics; (3) that, as regards equitable representation of the various nationalities, if it was a question of demanding reforms of the actual electoral laws, it appeared to me that it would be difficult to intervene.

"The Chargé d'Affaires assured me that that was not Count Berchtold's idea, and that what he wished to say was 'equitable representation assured by freedom of elections'."

Berchtold's proposals were daily curling up. They turned out to be not a positive programme, but a frothy approval of what France had already demanded and a vague indication of fresh advice to be given in regard to Ottoman elections. The mountain had brought forth a

[1] Telegrams from M. de Fleuriau, 1st September, Nos. 241 and 242

mouse. One advantage remained as a result of the sketchy Austrian initiative, in that conversations between the Powers had commenced and could now continue.

Austria had made the same *démarche* at Berlin, London and St. Petersburg, and de Manneville told me that Kiderlen did not appear to expect any great practical results from it. Thus while Germany remained sceptical, the Austrian suggestion appeared at first to have been better received in London. Sir Louis Mallet, favourably impressed, told M. de Fleuriau that opportunity was offered for a rapproachement between St. Petersburg and Vienna,[1] and here he hit the nail on the head.

The Austrian Government were pleased with the reply to Count Joseph Sommsich, and Dumaine telegraphed on 4th September : [2]

" Count Berchtold expressed lively satisfaction at the reception your Excellency accorded to the recent communication made by the Austro-Hungarian Chargé d'Affaires. He laid great stress on the benefit which the Powers concerned would derive from maintaining contact in consequence of this concerted action. Your approval of the proposal to suggest to the Ottoman Government that they should guarantee absolute freedom in the election of deputies and of councillors of the vilayets is an encouragement which is highly appreciated."

Berchtold did more justice to the French Government than German propagandists. Instead of alleging that we wished to isolate ourselves he thanked us for working for the unity of Europe.

Unfortunately, his ideas were always rather hazy. Dumaine informed me that in an interview, after expressing his great pleasure at what I had said to Count Somssich, Berchtold extolled the advantages of contact between the Governments who had been consulted on Near Eastern questions. " But," Dumaine added, " I have not succeeded in interesting Count Berchtold in any practical considerations ; he seems afraid of his own initiative as soon as there is a possibility of getting anything tangible out of it ".

Berchtold's palliatives became more and more illusory.

[1] Yellow Book, No. 90.

[2] Yellow Book, No. 91.

Louis, who had seen Kokovtzoff, telegraphed to me on the 5th :

"The President of the Council is much perturbed at the state of feeling in Bulgaria. He said to me : 'A critical moment has arrived. Bulgaria will complete the equipment of her army this month ; the harvest will have been reaped, and she is counting on receiving money from the loan.' I reassured the President of the Council on the latter point by telling him, as I had already told M. Sazonoff, that only last week you had warned the Bulgarian Government that, in the existing state of affairs, our bankers could not undertake the issue of the loan. M. Kokovtzoff appeared to be perfectly satisfied. The President added that fortunately the Great Powers all appeared to be animated by pacific intentions and that such intentions appeared to be general, as all the Bourses were firm and even showed a tendency to rise. Incidentally, it might be remarked that the German and Austrian Ambassadors are taking their leave at the usual time ; Count de Pourtalés left on Saturday last and Count de Thurn is on the point of going."

At all events, no disturbing news came from Berlin : the German Government were in complete agreement with us, and with the Balkan crisis they had seemed to be wishful to avoid complications. After the rupture of the naval negotiations with Great Britain, and before the entry into force of their new military laws, they had stuck to a very prudent policy, and said they had given the same reply at Vienna as ourselves. Kiderlen had not yet heard that the Ottoman Government proposed to extend the reforms bestowed on the Albanians to all the Christian nationalities of Macedonia : he learned, however, from the Austro-Hungarian Chargé d'Affaires that the Turkish Ambassador at Vienna had given the same assurances on this point as I had received from Rifaat. Kiderlen agreed with us that the Ambassadors at Constantinople ought to encourage the Ottoman Government to persevere in their path. He nevertheless considered that it was essential to avoid the appearance of intervention, and that, while making it evident that there was complete agreement amongst the Powers, we should proceed by giving independent friendly advice.

Berchtold remained unruffled, and Dumaine wrote :

" For some days past the Viennese press has been facing the Near Eastern situation with an optimism which evidently derives inspiration from the same source which caused the Count to be entirely imperturbable in the course of the interview I had with him on Wednesday. With his habitual elegance he avoids attributing more importance than appears becoming to the initiative which he thought fit to take and to which so many ulterior motives have been attributed. He even goes so far as to decline responsibility for the more or less hazardous consequences of his step in Europe and Turkey. ' On the whole, I do not think much will come of all this ', he smilingly confided to one of my colleagues." [1]

In spite of all this optimism in the Courts and Chancelleries, and of the diplomats' holidays and summer excursions, I was uncomfortable. Like the British Government, I recalled with some misgivings Sazonoff's objections to " disinterestedness " and feared the *status quo* of the Near East was to Austria and Russia nothing but a momentary *pis aller* and temporary expedient. The Balkan States, bound by their recent Agreements, must be stamping with impatience, and I perceived that their appetites were whetted by the concessions just made to the Albanian insurgents. According to M. de Fleuriau,[2] Sir Edward Grey himself had been so disturbed by this precedent that, on receiving news of the first benevolent measures announced by Ghazi Mukhtar Pasha, he had been on the point of intervening at Constantinople to advise their non-execution. He had a presentiment that they would be contagious, and was only prevented from carrying out his original intention by the arrival of the Berchtold proposal. He was extremely anxious, moreover, not to embarrass the Turkish Government and not to do anything which might give another shake to a tottering edifice. With clear-sighted judgement he asked the two groups of Powers to unite without any *arrière-pensée* and to avoid any act or gesture which might bring them into opposition to one another.

M. de Fleuriau telegraphed on 6th September :

[1] Despatch of 7th September.
[2] Despatch of 5th September 1912.

"Sir Edward Grey proposes to reply to the last Austrian communication, in general and courteous terms, that he has already counselled the Sublime Porte to extend to the other Balkan peoples the privileges granted to the Albanians, and that he has expressed to the Turkish Government his approval of the measures they have taken with the object of ensuring freedom of the elections. He proposes to thank Count Berchtold for having created the opportunity of exchanging views with the other Powers whose co-operation is necessary for the pacific settlement of Balkan affairs. Sir Louis Mallet informed me that this last phrase had been inspired by your instructions to the French Ambassador at Vienna (telegram No. 629). By concluding his reply in this manner, Sir Edward Grey wishes to make it understood that the pourparlers commenced on Count Berchtold's initiative have terminated, and he begs me to ask your Excellency—he has made a similar inquiry of M. Sazonoff—whether you do not consider it advisable that the three Powers should reply in this sense, so as to make it politely understood that the Austrian proposals have come to an end. The British Ambassador at Vienna states that all the Powers have already replied to Count Berchtold, and the Foreign Office desires me to ask your Excellency whether you consider the conversation reported in telegram No. 638 (my recent conversation with Count Somssich) the only reply necessary to the Austrian suggestion."

Thus the British Government intended to send the same reply as we to Vienna: they considered it sufficient, and Berchtold had been completely satisfied with it. I could only acquiesce in Sir Edward's observations and inform him that I had nothing to add,[1] as I did not wish, by further insistence, to appear indiscreet, nor to cause Vienna to suspect that I was endeavouring to substitute a French initiative for Austria's.

M. Laroche reported[2] that the Italian Government considered that the fresh Austrian *démarche* constituted an admission of the failure of the Berchtold proposal, and that it showed a "surprising naïveté". It was evident, remarked our Chargé d'Affaires, that this lack of success was a source of real satisfaction to the Italian Government, which shows there must be some cracks in the alliance between Rome and Vienna!

[1] Yellow Book, No. 96.

[2] Rome, 6th September.

The German grand military manœuvres were to commence on 10th September in the Elbe basin. It was decided that the President of the Republic should attend ours, which had been fixed for a week later and were to be held inland, far from the frontier, in order to avoid any malevolent interpretation by Germany. The strike of naval reservists had been brought to an end by both sides accepting arbitration, and free from internal preoccupations, our one thought was how to smother the smouldering fires in the Near East.

CHAPTER XIX

The pacific efforts of France—The President of the Republic at the Grand Manœuvres—The Grand Duke Nicholas in France—M. Isvolsky's coffee—Preparation of the European concert—Mobilisation of the Balkan States.

SAZONOFF had told our Louis that having heard read the last Austrian communication, he had expressed himself to Comte Thurn as wholly satisfied that the two Governments were agreed on two essential points, the necessity to maintain the *status quo* and the duty to act in common with all the Powers. The Russian Minister had only added that a régime of proportional representation was doubtless desirable, but that in Turkey this would be attended by difficulties. Sazonoff then let Louis know that he was going to London on the 18th; he would return via France and Germany, and would stay a day or two in Paris in strict incognito.

On the day I heard this I received the Serbian Minister, M. Vesnitch, at the Quai d'Orsay, whom I did not then realise to be the strong and sincere friend of France he later proved himself. He had come unofficially to impart to me his apprehensions about the Balkans, as the excitement which had arisen in Bulgaria was infecting the Serbian populations in Serbia and Macedonia, and like Kokovtzoff, he wondered whether after the harvest the Bulgarian Government might not challenge Turkey.

I told Vesnitch that the secret convention of his country with Bulgaria had unhappily something to do with all this unrest. I could anyhow assure him that the Powers were firmly resolved to maintain peace, and that if Serbia allowed herself to be dragged into a fight with Turkey,

she would be involved in a most dangerous adventure. Without abusing Sazonoff's confidence or giving details of the Balkan conventions, I let all our representatives know of my talk with Vesnitch and told our Minister at Belgrade to speak with M. Yovanovitch on the same lines : we were doing all in our power to cool down the Balkan States and throw cold water on their ambitions.

At Sofia Paňafieu tried in vain to know Guéchoff's real mind ; he thought that the Bulgarian Minister was no longer to be depended on by the apostles of peace, and that, perhaps unknown to himself, he had accustomed himself to what might gravely disturb it. Guéchoff had even warned the Russian Minister that if the lot of the Macedonian Christians were not considerably improved, he would be forced to choose between war abroad and war at home. The " Little Brothers " were trying to force the hand of Russia.

Excitement extended beyond Greece, and without actually mobilising, the Greek Government were pushing on military preparations and fostering public manifestations in favour of the Greeks in Turkey.

As a set-off, the news from Morocco was reassuring. Marakech had been occupied by Colonel Mangin, the French captives had been rescued, the protectorate had been solidly established, and Africa need not distract our thoughts from the Balkans.

Sir Edward Grey, with his characteristic loyalty, had made, though against his original idea, representations at Constantinople, and Sir Francis Bertie told us that the British Government let the Porte know how intolerable was the régime imposed on the Christian populations ; that the abuses were as bad as before the revolution ; that the recent conduct of the Ottoman Government had been disappointing, although due praise was given for the reforms granted to the Albanians ; that Sir Edward hoped the Porte would itself take the initiative and give the same advantages to all the Christian populations of the Balkans and so render unnecessary official representations by the Powers. The British Minister labelled his communication

as purely of a friendly and unofficial nature ; Djevad Bey replied that he appreciated the intentions of the British Minister, but that just now an announcement respecting reforms would look like a concession due to pressure from Austria - Hungary. The Porte professed itself wholly in agreement with the Powers and promised to prepare a programme of reforms which would be rendered impossible if such representations were officially addressed. Sir Edward Grey thought that it would be better to hold his hand, and Sir Francis Bertie was as lively as usual in dilating on this decision.

Finally Great Britain accepted, like France, the rather platonic views of Count Berchtold, and Vienna, although our common efforts had come to nothing, was grateful. On the 12th September Dumaine repeated to me that France and Great Britain had been of great help to Austria by regarding the intentions of the Vienna Cabinet as wholly loyal and without any of the *arrière-pensée* elsewhere attributed to it. " I have already spoken ", said Dumaine, " about the satisfaction expressed by Count Berchtold respecting the conversation which you had with Count Somssich. After having thrown himself into an adventure the results of which he was not able to see clearly, he intimated how happy he was in that his suggestions were interpreted in the most favourable sense."

The Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaievitch and the Grand Duchess Anastasia had arrived at Paris on the day before. Dumaine made these pleasant remarks, and the Russian Commander-in-Chief was to attend the military manœuvres, at the close of which the President of the Republic was to be present. On Monday 12th M. and Mme. Fallières gave a luncheon in honour of our guests, to which all the members of the Government and many of the generals were invited.

Isvolsky was just back from Russia, and after luncheon he came up to me and we had a talk which was continually interrupted by various guests, and which was of course reported by letter to Sazonoff.

When Mr. Robert Dell, the English journalist whom Clemenceau had to expel during the war, got to know,

through Bolshevist publications, about Isvolsky's letter, he wrote in *The Nation* that from now onwards Isvolsky wanted to fight, and that it was he who pulled strings behind the French Government. I do not believe that in 1912 Isvolsky wanted war ; I know that he never pulled strings behind the French Government, and most certainly the French Government never for a moment ceased to be pacific.

As usual Isvolsky embroidered our conversation, and Mr. Robert Dell and his friends detached a sentence and twisted it to mean something else.

M. Isvolsky began by quoting my preliminary remarks as " *It will be very important not to forsake a General European policy and, as far as possible, to prevent any possibility of isolated interventions* ".

Dell deliberately ignored this phrase, which governed the rest of the interview, as also my remark, " I shall only give my permission for this [Bulgarian] loan *after having been convinced that all danger is guarded against* ".

The sentence enlarged upon by the supporters of the German " *innocentistes* " is the mere reproduction of simple assurances which I gave to M. Sazonoff at St. Petersburg, and he reports faithfully to the Emperor.

"If the conflict with Austria "—these are the exact words of Isvolsky—" should entail armed intervention by Germany, the French Government recognises at once that such a state of affairs constitutes a *casus foederis* and she would not hesitate a minute to fulfil her obligations to Russia."

Immediately after this passage, printed by the Black Book in large characters, there is another passage which is conveniently passed over :

" France is indisputably disposed towards peace and neither seeks nor desires war ; but intervention by Germany against Russia would immediately alter this frame of mind, and the French Government is convinced that in such circumstances Parliament and public opinion would entirely approve the decision of the Government to grant armed assistance to Russia."

This last throws light on what may appear incomplete and obscure in what precedes.

I was not likely to choose " after luncheon " at the

Élysée, with a hundred guests buzzing round, as a suitable moment for Isvolsky to extract from me a rash promise which might go to upset French politics. Isvolsky, like Sazonoff and most Russian statesmen, was often uneasy as to the results of the alliance, should circumstances arise to constitute the *casus foederis*. "I know well enough", he said to me, "that this, and probably any French Government will be ready to fulfil the pact, but in Russia the Emperor is all powerful and so France may be sure of us, while in France the Government is impotent without Parliament. Parliament does not know the text of 1892. It only derives its information about our alliance from official speeches. What guarantee have we that in the event of a general outbreak your Parliament would follow your Government's lead and recognise for itself the sanctity of obligations entered into?"

To this I replied (as I had said to M. Sazonoff, who reported to the Czar), "France would not contemplate a general war over the Balkans". "But if Austria attacked us?" "That would not constitute the *casus foederis*, and we could do nothing." "But if Germany came to the aid of Austria?" "That would be another thing; the alliance would cause us to intervene." "You believe that public opinion and Parliament would accept this duty?" "If Germany attacked, without doubt."

One has only to read Isvolsky's letter with an open mind to see that he quite understood, and, at all events, I said the only thing I could say. Ought Isvolsky to have been told, as he puffed the Élysée cigars, that the Russian alliance was regarded by us as a scrap of paper, and that I believed France to be capable of tearing it up? How could we afterwards have had the smallest justification for appealing to Russia if Germany were to attack us?

It would seem that the same pro-German writers held that I committed another crime under the very eyes of President Fallières and the Ministers. I am supposed to have told Isvolsky in confidence that in the event of a war, "informed and responsible persons", that is, the "chief departments at the French War Office", saw rosy chances for France and Russia. In devoting four large pages

to a conversation which Isvolsky himself described as "accidental", the latter surely somewhat abused the confidence and the patience of Sazonoff. He doubtless wished, on his return to Paris, to demonstrate to his Government that over coffee and a liqueur he had assimilated more information than his Chargé d'Affaires could obtain in a fortnight, though I can scarcely see myself having a prolonged *tête-à-tête* with one of the guests at an official party. I have not kept notes of our conversation, nor do I remember that Isvolsky asked me as to what was the thought of the generals who were present, whom he could have questioned if he wished. If, however, he did ask me "whether I should be confident if war were to break out", I certainly did not say, "No; we should be beaten."

Isvolsky's letter brings me back to Fabre-Luce. Odd that a writer who rightly mistrusted Isvolsky's sincerity should yet blindly accept as gospel everything said by this Ambassador which could possibly be turned against the French Government; and at least he might have taken the trouble to quote Isvolsky accurately. To compare the actual words of Isvolsky and what Fabre-Luce draws from them:

"Poincaré considers personally", writes the Ambassador, "that the secret Serbo-Bulgar agreement is causing quite as much excitement amongst the Bulgarians as the Serbs; he had already told me at St. Petersburg, immediately after having taken note of the text of this agreement, that in his opinion, it was an instrument of war, and the rôle of arbitrator assigned to Russia, complicates the situation still further. The Bulgarians are convinced that even if the Russian Government at once exercised their veto, it would be, nevertheless, in the event of war between Bulgaria and Turkey (and especially in the case of a Bulgarian defeat) committed to military action taken in obedience to Russian public opinion. If, following a declaration on the part of Russia, Bulgaria is not in a position to profit by the present juncture, that would adversely affect the influence and prestige of Russia in Bulgaria, and also the conception of a friendly policy and of an entente between the Balkan States under the aegis of Russia. The successors of Guéchoff, the Stamboulovistes or the Radislovistes would immediately free themselves from the treaty with Serbia, and return to their former policy of the balance of power between Russia and Austria."

All that happened in 1913 and 1914 confirmed only too well my conjectures. But could any honest man pick holes in anything I said to Isvolsky? I told him over and over again that the Balkan conventions were deplorable, that they excited the Bulgarians and the Serbs, and that the mistake made by the St. Petersburg Government might have most unfortunate consequences even for Russia. The Russian Cabinet, who beforehand, in sanctioning and perhaps favouring these Balkan agreements, thought that they had done a good piece of work and had increased their influence in the Balkans, would be the victim of their own cleverness. Isvolsky did not attempt to change my views. He had not presided over the preparation and the acceptance of the agreements, he disliked Hartwig, Russian Minister at Belgrade, who took active part in the proceedings, and rather liked indirectly coaching his successor and former subordinate. If Fabre-Luce were other than a mere theorist he would easily have understood what was actually said by the Ambassador and what was understood. But he seizes upon a single sentence [1], and thus isolated, the sentence which he parades cannot but be misunderstood by the reader. I appear to encourage Russia to leave Bulgaria alone. Not a word concerning the loan which was refused; not one word concerning my criticisms of the Balkan agreements; not one word touching on my recommendations respecting the necessity for an European entente. I urge Russia instead of restraining her. Whether all this is deliberate misrepresentation on the part of Fabre-Luce I do not know. But let us hope that he will learn one day not to alter texts by picking out words here and there. Enough as to how Isvolsky sugared his coffee.

I left Paris on the morning of Monday the 16th, travelling by the President's train, which stopped at Rambouillet to pick up M. Fallières, and which took us both to Tours, where we were to dine and sleep at the Prefecture, before attending the grand manœuvres near Saint Maure. Millerand had

[1] "If on the eve of conflict, as a result of a declaration on the part of Russia, Bulgaria should not be in a position to profit by the present juncture, she would strike a blow at the influence and prestige of Russia in the Balkans."

gone on before us, and on the next day we left by motor car with the new secretary-general of the Élysée, M. Collignon, the sometime Prefect, whom Clemenceau, to the President's great regret, had summarily dismissed.[1] President Fallières, instructed by General Joffre and General de Castelnau, carefully followed the operations of the red and blue armies from the Bagneux castle, and after the "Cease Fire" proceeded to St. Maure, where he gave a banquet to the great Russian soldier and his staff, as well as to ministers, senators, deputies, French generals, and the foreign military missions who had flocked from all over the world.

On my return to Paris I found a telegram (dated 17th) from Jules Cambon, which spoke of Sazonoff informing the Berlin Government that the present attitude of Bulgaria and Serbia caused him much anxiety. Kiderlen had agreed with him as to the Powers arranging to localise a war, if war should occur, and said it was for the Russian Government to initiate such an understanding. The German Government therefore considered the Berchtold proposal as null and void, and Sazonoff thought that in order to complete the preparations for the concert of Powers, a new agreement coming from another direction was necessary.

Rome was delighted that the motion of the Austrian Government was declared out of date. "Yesterday", so wrote M. Laroche, "I asked Marquis de San Giuliano what action was taken on the second *démarche* of the Austrian Cabinet". "None", he replied; "it involved none, at least, as regards us. The memorandum that the Austro-Hungarian Chargé d'Affaires handed me showed that his Government recognised the futility of fresh intervention with the Balkan States on the part of the Powers, either collectively or simultaneously. We have only to acquiesce. The part of this document relating to Turkey has no effect, as war has severed our relations with Constantinople."

On the 18th Isvolsky made me a communication on

[1] M. Collignon, despite of his age and his duties as Counsellor of State, later enlisted as a private soldier during the war and died on the field of honour.

behalf of Sazonoff; my reply can be found in the Yellow Book, but the Black Book can be searched in vain for any trace of it, as can the different misleading commentaries to which it gave rise. I wanted to know exactly what Sazonoff thought, and as I a little mistrusted Isvolsky I begged him to put on paper what his chief's views precisely were. "Sazonoff", he wrote, "urged upon the Turkish Ambassador that Turkey, to avoid serious complications, must institute reforms in Macedonia which would guarantee to the Christian population safety of person and of property, equality in law, and a share in the organisation and administration, in accordance with the local ethnological distribution."

I gave Isvolsky my objections to Sazonoff's views and I let all our representatives know that I had said *I was unable to support the initiative of M. Sazonoff, that if the British Government agreed and if the Vienna and Berlin Governments were also ready to support, I, speaking for myself, reserved judgement*, particularly with regard to the reforms proposed in the third paragraph.

If Sazonoff was obviously bewildered, Bethmann-Hollweg appeared quite comfortable, and told Cambon that he was convinced no one, not even Russia, and less still Austria, wanted war in Europe, and that in any case if a conflict should break out, the Powers could fence it round.

Paul Cambon wrote on the 19th September: [1]

"The proposal of Count Berchtold seems to me a reply by Austria Hungary to the initiative taken by the Russian Government when presiding at the time of the Serb-Bulgarian agreement. It is quite clear to me that this agreement—which was quickly only secret in name—was soon known at Vienna. Doubtless King Ferdinand himself divulged its contents, and he must have thrown the responsibility for this agreement on to Russia, alleging pressure from St. Petersburg. If Ferdinand had not taken Austria into his confidence why did Count Berchtold keep him informed of his intentions? Our Ambassador at Vienna declared King Ferdinand received an expected communication

[1] He thought that to attempt to establish an ethnical percentage in Macedonia is to raise an insoluble problem, as each race which occupies that country pretends that it constitutes the majority.

concerning the Berchtold proposal. These proceedings can only be explained in that this co-operation was probably originated by the Bulgarian Czar."

Paul Cambon added that the Serbian Chargé d'Affaires at London had spoken bitterly about Russia. His country was abandoned by her and " nothing remains for us but to throw ourselves into the arms of Austria ". Count Benckendorff feared that Bulgaria would be compelled to strike a blow and Russia would be dragged on by Serbia. But Paul Cambon shared the view of Sir Arthur Nicolson that the most pressing danger was not at Sofia, Belgrade, St. Petersburg or at Vienna, but rather at Constantinople. With any aggravation of the Turkish domestic crisis it would become difficult to keep the Bulgarians off Macedonia and the other neighbours of the Ottoman Empire from rushing after the spoils. Thus, the British Government were endeavouring to prevent anything which might shake the Cabinet of Ghazi Mouktar and Kiamal Pasha. " This is why ", Paul Cambon concluded, " the Berchtold proposal was considered inopportune at London ; any concession which the Turkish Government might make to their Macedonian subjects or to others, would most certainly have been misinterpreted by their adversaries the Young Turks."

Sazonoff was expected in London, and one felt that his presence there and at Balmoral would facilitate the general action of the Powers which de Kiderlen and Bethmann-Hollweg desired. Isvolsky had seen Sazonoff when he was about to cross the channel, and the Minister said that he did not insist on his formula nor did he insist particularly on the third paragraph, but he was convinced that the Bulgarians could not be restrained unless the Porte were forced to make effective concessions. He had reason to believe, and events proved that this was right, that Bulgaria was counting on a Montenegrin movement to excite the Balkans, and that she herself was ready to go to war about the 15th October. My information was less alarming, and I wondered whether Bulgaria was not intentionally talking loud at St. Petersburg, so as to speed up intervention from the Imperial Government at Constantinople.

Rifaat Pasha unfortunately confirmed Sazonoff's information. He was sure that events were coming to a head in the East, and on the 22nd September I asked Paul Cambon to sound Sir Edward Grey and Sazonoff as to a general entente, the draft of which I sent to London :

" The Government of the French Republic, the British Government and the Imperial Russian Government, equally desirous of safeguarding peace and of maintaining the *status quo* in the Balkan Peninsula, consider that collective action by the Great Powers is the only means of obviating serious events which menace the tranquillity and the balance in Eastern Europe. Consequently, the said Governments agree to submit the following arrangements for the approval of the Imperial German Government, and the Imperial and Royal Government of Austria Hungary.

" (1) The Powers shall intervene simultaneously and with the least possible delay with the Cabinets of Sofia, Belgrade, Athens and Cettinje, and shall advise these Governments to do nothing which might disturb the peace or affect the *status quo* in the Balkan Peninsula.

" (2) In the event of these counsels not being listened to, the Powers shall immediately combine their efforts to localise the conflict and to put an end to it. They shall particularly declare to the States who disturb the peace, that the latter can hope for no territorial aggrandisement in the event of a possible victory.

" (3) If the trend of events should necessitate the employment of more energetic means such as a military or naval demonstration, the Powers should only have recourse to such action after having concerted together.

" (4) At the same time, they shall carry out the specific *démarche* on equal terms.

" (5) The Powers shall intercede with the Sublime Porte and shall advise the institution without delay of administrative reforms legitimately claimed by the Christian populations of the Balkan Peninsula."

I communicated this draft to Isvolsky, who replied : " I am afraid that this procedure will not secure the approval of Sazonoff, nor that of England, because it would show up the two groups into which Europe is divided ". Was this Isvolsky's trouble, or did he fear that after the Balkans conventions it would be difficult for Russia to speak my plain language with the Slav States and with Greece ? " *The*

double grouping is known to every one", I told him, "*and overt co-operation between the two groups is all to the good*"; and to Paul Cambon I said: "If communication as between one group and another is distasteful to M. Sazonoff or to the British Government, the French Government is quite disposed to initiate negotiations with Germany and Austria Hungary on the basis indicated". How could one be more careful not to set one group against another, or try more genuinely for a European entente?

My telegrams had arrived at London before Sazonoff left for a two days' visit to Balmoral, where he was to see Sir Edward Grey. The Russian Minister thought my draft satisfactory, but that the British Government would prefer to avoid a concerted *démarche* by the Powers of the Triple Entente at Berlin and at Vienna, and would object to collective intervention at the Sublime Porte. Sazonoff said that the pourparlers between the three Powers, previous to common action, should be secret, and that the Ambassadors, whilst expressing themselves in the same sense, should not give the idea that they were taking part in a collective action.

Nothing was easier, after the second telegram that I had sent to London, than to satisfy Sazonoff and Grey on this point. Paul Cambon wrote to us:

"*September 23rd*, 1912.

"Sazonoff told me yesterday that the relations between our two countries had never been more confidential and more cordial, and that agreement was complete on all questions. I already knew through my Russian colleague that in a telegram which he had received from St. Petersburg after your Russian journey Sazonoff had expressed himself in the most flattering terms concerning you and that he had noted the excellent impression which your visit had had on the mind of the Emperor. I have been obliged to hand to M. Sazonoff a copy of the draft agreement, the text of which you transmitted to me by telegraph, as he had to leave the same day in order to call on Sir Edward Grey to-day at Balmoral; the latter had left London Saturday evening. I also had given a copy to Sir Arthur Nicolson for Sir Edward."

Paul Cambon confirmed his telegram by letter, and added: "When it concerns the Balkans, St. Petersburg does

not like initiative from outside and discourages it; and in the event of help being necessary St. Petersburg knows how to go about it. They imagine that the prestige of Russia in the small Slav States would be weakened if it were otherwise. It is a useless policy, but nothing will alter it. Sazonoff fears nothing from the Serbs. They are, he says, in the hand of Austria, and everything depends on the intentions of this Power. Nor does he believe in any project of a re-entry into the Sanjak. He recently had an interview with the Austro-Hungarian Chargé d'Affaires at St. Petersburg on this subject, who spontaneously spoke of the unnecessary anxieties apparent everywhere with regard to the Sanjak: 'We did not leave there', he said, 'as an act of generosity to Turkey; we evacuated it because we could not stay there. It is a corridor between inaccessible mountains.' It seems, therefore, that an Austrian invasion here is not to be feared. With regard to an entry into Serbia, that is only to be feared if the Bulgarians cross the Macedonian frontier. 'But', said Sazonoff, 'I think that M. Guéchoff wants to blackmail us'. The Bulgarian Government is not morally supported by Russia—it knows that it cannot force the hands of Russia as the Slavs of the Balkan Peninsula did in 1878, because Roumania forms an impassable barrier between them and the Russians, and that on the least military demonstration by Bulgaria against Macedonia, the Roumanian army would cross the Danube. Sazonoff's opinion was confirmed by a Roumanian officer, who was at the English manœuvres. The chief of our mission, General Foch, questioned him on the situation in the Balkans. 'Nothing will happen', replied the Roumanian; 'we are keeping an eye on the Bulgarians, and they know that if they budge we are ready to fall upon them'.

"All these considerations lead us to think that there is nothing to be excessively alarmed about concerning Bulgarian excitement."

Paul Cambon continued: "Sazonoff will stay at Balmoral until Friday, then he will go to Scotland as the guest of Lord Crewe, son-in-law of Lord Rosebery. He

will return to London on Monday the 30th, and will leave almost immediately for Paris. On his return journey to St. Petersburg, he will stop twenty-four hours at Berlin, and will ask the German Chancellor to do all he can at Vienna with a view to preserve peace. He said he would have liked to have a hand in renewing good relations with Vienna, but could not be the first to go there. 'Berchtold', he added, 'became Minister after me; I must wait for his visit. I knew that he proposed to come to see me; he was prevented; I regret this.' Who", continued Paul Cambon, "could have prevented Berchtold from going to St. Petersburg, if not the Emperor of Austria? And why did he do it if not because he disliked the Serbo-Bulgarian Agreement prepared by Sazonoff?" If the best-informed men scarcely scented the danger, it was difficult for European Governments to decide betimes what had best be done.

Forty-eight hours after, Paul Cambon warned me that having examined the draft agreement at Balmoral, a copy of which he had given to Sir Edward Grey and Sazonoff, they did not rule out the idea of a communication to Berlin and Vienna in the sense of paragraphs 1 and 2 of my text, but they rejected paragraphs 3 and 4 (1). In other words, they accepted an address to the Balkan States in favour of the *status quo*, and the effort to localise hostilities, with a threat to the Balkan States respecting no territorial advantages; they rejected the action at Constantinople, and the allusion to the necessity to consult together with a view to more energetic measures. The chances of success, I thought, were diminished.

But who was now to take the initiative in this intervention, first with Germany and Austria, and afterwards with the Balkan States? I consulted Sir Edward Grey and Sazonoff as to the procedure which they preferred, and it was agreed that our representatives should act at Vienna and Berlin equally, but separately, and that they should propose a general entente, along the lines of my draft, but with the second part cut out. On the other hand, Kiderlen had said to Jules Cambon, I do not know why,

that in his opinion the address to the Balkan States could only be made by one of the neighbouring Powers, Austria or Russia. As Sazonoff was due in Paris, I could deal with him directly concerning it.

Bompard now heard through Gabriel Effendi that the Ottoman Government had heard of and resented the Serbo-Bulgarian Agreement ; a raid on Adrianople by the Bulgarians was on the cards, and ten divisions of *redifs* were mobilised in Roumelia.

The story spread that peace was going to be signed between Italy and Turkey, and the Balkan States in a flurry discussed their proposed ultimatum to the Porte, brushing aside any dissuasion from England, Russia and ourselves. M. Stanciof, Bulgarian Minister, just returned from Sofia, trotted round the French banks to try and obtain first twenty millions, then coming down to ten, and even five, but at my instigation was shown the door. He did not conceal that this loan was for a military purpose, and I telegraphed for an immediate explanation.

King George of Greece, who, after his holiday at Aix-les-Bains, had gone to visit his family at Copenhagen, was urged by his Ministers to return to Athens. He had seen me in Paris, but had talked more about Crete than the Balkans. At Berlin, on the 30th September, he asked to see Jules Cambon, who wrote :

" The King commenced by telling me how happy he had been to see you at Paris. He appreciated your clear views and frank tone and was very pleased with your assurance that France would endeavour to settle the Cretan question immediately after the cessation of hostilities between Italy and Turkey. The question of the islands will come up then and with it the question of Crete. The King considers, therefore, that in the interests alike of peace in the East and of the protecting Powers, it would be a far-sighted policy to settle the Cretan difficulties, at least for a certain number of years. The rôle of Bulgaria seemed to the King difficult to make out. In the newspapers and in the Chancelleries the Bulgarian Government pretends to be pacific but secretly is constantly urging Greece to mobilise and to begin the struggle, and causing Greece to hope that she will herself immediately take the field. Thus Bulgaria wishes to have her hand

forced. On the other hand, King George is persuaded that Turkey wants the fight, as it would make her conclude peace with Italy, and would thus save the face of the Turkish Government in the eyes of the Moslems. All the Turks would unite in spite of their internal divisions and would hope that a victory in Macedonia would cause Tripoli to be forgotten. The King is going to Vienna. Vienna is in his opinion the real centre of Near Eastern policy."

This was neither clear nor reassuring. As Kiderlen had promised Jules Cambon, that if Russia intervened with the Balkan States Austria would willingly support her, I told Isvolsky to telegraph to Sazonoff to beg him to accept, without delay, either immediate action by the five Powers or simultaneous action by Austria and Russia.

Both Sazonoff and Sir Edward Grey wished to ask Turkey not to concentrate troops at the frontier, and thought representations should be made to the Balkan States to prevent them from mobilising.

They hoped Vienna and Berlin, as well as ourselves, would agree, as I did willingly, but on the same day Panafieu telegraphed to me that the mobilisation order was published at Sofia, as in Serbia, and that the Skupshina was to meet on the 3rd October in order to vote military credits, and then to adjourn.

The volcano, whose eruption I had dreaded, was belching out its preliminary flames.

CHAPTER XX

After the mobilisation of the Balkan States—Fresh efforts by France to maintain peace—Appeals to Europe—Declaration of war by Montenegro—Unrest in Bulgaria—Demonstrations at Constantinople—The Note from the Balkan States—Final efforts—Beginning of the fight.

On 1st October, Greece followed the example of Bulgaria and Serbia. In spite of their mobilisation, there was still some hope of restraining the Balkan States if Europe acted promptly and decisively, and at the Quai d'Orsay I remonstrated with the Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek Ministers, who had constantly hung out the peace banner of their countries. I begged them to advise their Governments to hold their hand; they promised all I asked and professed great surprise.

Bethmann-Hollweg told Jules Cambon that he believed there was still a chance of peace and affected to think that the action of the French Government might be decisive.[1]

Kiderlen thought only a miracle would prevent hostilities, and that to localise the conflict a joint declaration should be made to the belligerents that when peace was concluded, no territorial change in the Balkans would be accepted;[2] precisely the first condition I had just persuaded Sazonoff to accept and to which Sir Edward had agreed. The Secretary of State noted the "happy coincidence" which allowed me to meet the Russian Minister, and was disposed to persuade Austria to agree to our solution. "Let us hope", he said, "that the danger of a general war can be averted. France can achieve something, the consequences of which will be far-reaching."[3] France was already busy on this

[1] Yellow Book, No. 121. [2] Yellow Book, No. 124.
[3] Yellow Book, No. 124.

" achievement "—the unanimity of the Powers · she effected it in 1912 and maintained it in 1913, thanks to Great Britain and Russia ; unfortunately it did not rest with her to safeguard it in 1914.

On 1st October Paul Cambon told Sazonoff of my idea (which Germany seemingly approved), to entrust Russia and Austria with a sort of European mandate for the Balkan States. The Russian Minister at first pronounced himself delighted by this proposal,[1] and thought no rational Russian would mix himself up with a " little Slav " adventure, but if the Austrians entered Serbia, Muscovite opinion would be roused.[2]

In reporting this conversation, Cambon wrote : " Putting on one side the possibility of a general conflict, we are face to face with the possibility of war between Turkey and the Balkan States. Sazonoff and Sir Arthur Nicolson, despite their sympathy with the Christian races, looked rather for the success of Turkey, who could be subsequently held in, whereas the victory of the small States might bring awkward complications. Sazonoff puts the armies of the coalition at fifty thousand ; I thought the Serbian army did not count for much, and the Greek army for nothing at all ; they would only occupy the attention of the Turks, leaving the serious offensive element to the Bulgarian army. I asked Sazonoff what Russia would do if Ferdinand's victorious troops advanced as far as Constantinople. ' We would send a squadron to the Bosphorus to protect the Turkish capital ', he replied. Sir Arthur Nicolson only said the British Government would be greatly embarrassed, because their squadron would meet the Russian squadron at Seraglio Point and the Russians certainly could not declare themselves against the Bulgarians.

Every minute lost might prove fatal. The next morning I telephoned to Cambon whether Sazonoff had finally assented to the Austro-Russian move ; Sazonoff wanted still to think it over and would talk to me that evening

[1] " Austria, if she were bound by a European mandate ", he said to M. Paul Cambon, " would no longer be able to intervene and so rouse Russian public opinion, which had hitherto remained indifferent to events ".

[2] Private letter from M. Paul Cambon, 1st October.

on his arrival in Paris: for the time being he begged us not to mention it to any one. Cambon thought that the Minister must have consulted the Emperor and was awaiting a reply.[1]

Nicolson, he said, favoured our plan.[2] I telegraphed to Jules Cambon:

"Although Sazonoff is reserving his reply until his interview with me, I have reason to suppose, from a confidential telegram from your brother, that Russia would agree to join Austria in taking, in the name of Europe, energetic action at Constantinople and in the Balkans. To save time, it would be well that Germany should sound Austria at once and dissuade her from any isolated action."

Germany would thus restrain Austria while we kept our steadying hand on Russia.

Jules Cambon asked the Secretary of State "if it were understood that Austria and Russia, in declaring there would be no change in the territorial *status quo* of the Balkans whatever the issue of the fight with Turkey, would be acting for all the Great Powers, including Germany?" He told him that I must be certain of this before conferring with Sazonoff. The reply was that Russia and Austria could act in the name of all the Great Powers or these might join with them, as Russia and Austria might prefer. Cambon added: "The Secretary of State told me confidentially that Austria would associate herself with Russia and that the matter had been decided at Vienna".[3]

Bethmann-Hollweg was on the same path:

"The Chancellor repeated", Cambon wired, "that he was counting on the peace of Europe being assured, thanks to your efforts. The *North German Gazette* will publish a *communiqué* this evening, announcing the union of the Great Powers to prevent, or at least to localise, the conflict, and give an assurance that they are taking no part in it."[4]

But Turkey had replied to the Balkan mobilisation by ordering a general mobilisation, and Bompard reported that

[1] Note taken by M. Daeschner and annexed to the dossier.
[2] Letter from M. Paul Cambon, 2nd October. Yellow Book, No. 126.
[3] Yellow Book, No. 129.
[4] Yellow Book, 2nd October, No. 130.

the Russian Ambassador at Constantinople had proposed to Sazonoff: "The five Powers should notify Turkey, Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece that they could not allow a rupture of the peace, and, moreover, being resolved to realise the necessary reforms in Roumelia, that they would take the matter in hand as being within their province".

Sazonoff, I found, knew all about de Giers' scheme and was naturally strongly tempted by the second part. Russia, he said, would join with Austria, or with all the Powers, in making a move on behalf of Europe. He quite understood that the Balkan States would be informed that the Great Powers could not allow a rupture of the peace and that they were determined to maintain the *status quo*, to localise the conflict if it should break out, and to leave the mobilised States no hope of territorial aggrandisement. "Then let us inform Berlin at once." "By all means, but allow me to point out that our *démarche* will have no prospect of success with the States who are in a state of excitement unless the Great Powers pronounce for reforms." "This the French Government had put forward, 22nd September, but you wasted a week thinking it over." "The British Government did not want intervention, but now if the Balkans are to be held in, Macedonia *must* have reforms." "Quite so! but, in any case, we must hurry up. I am going to telegraph to Berlin and London. Will you do likewise?" "Certainly."

I asked Paul Cambon to notify the British Government that "in whichever way thought best, France is prepared either to take the initiative immediately in a collective *démarche* or to associate herself with any similar initiative". Jules Cambon was to tell the Imperial Government the same thing and to say: "In the present crisis we would not yield to any diplomatic *amour-propre*".[1]

Sazonoff, for his part, let Berlin know that Russia was prepared to intervene on the lines indicated, and Kiderlen was pleased with what I had said to Sazonoff. He only objected: "Monsieur Sazonoff proposes to tell the Balkan States that the Powers will not tolerate a violation of the

[1] Yellow Book, Nos. 132, 133, 134.

peace; it must not be concluded from that that they would have recourse to coercive measures if such appeared to be necessary. As for reforms, Europe has long been demanding them, but if too many stipulations are made, it will be difficult to secure agreement; and in any case, we could not pledge ourselves to accept all the demands of the Balkan States, as they might be excessive." Here were more reservations and hesitations; Germany was pleading Austria's cause in advance.

Paul Cambon thought we could now only localise the fight, and the best means would be to get Austria and Russia to act together. "If the German Government holds the same opinion, Your Excellency can at once inform all the Powers of your proposal for an Austro-Russian mandate which is now the essential point."[1] Our Ambassador was sceptical as regards the reforms, and in a long despatch he told me Sazonoff's earlier optimism seemed to have changed to anxiety. If Austria invaded Serbia, Sazonoff thought, it would be difficult for Russia to remain neutral: and his hand might be forced by public opinion.

Sazonoff really seemed nothing if not profoundly pacific. The Russian Government had imprudently not opposed—and, though I was unaware of it, had joined in—the preparation of the Balkan agreements, so as not to displease their "little Slav brothers"—so Panafieu told me; but, for some weeks past, they had been so nervous of the consequences of their indulgence that they had lectured and scolded the Balkan States in a tone little short of offensive. On 14th September Sazonoff told Belgrade, Cettinje and Athens that in future Russia would do nothing for Serbia, Montenegro or Greece unless they refused to co-operate with Bulgaria, and warned Bulgaria that she must discount Russia's "benevolence". Sazonoff was not incorrect, as the Sofia agreements reserved him the right of veto, but the interested parties saw otherwise and accused St. Petersburg of abandoning them. Russia had been weak; she was now reproached quite unjustifiably for treachery.

The Balkan Ministers, when Sazonoff and I saw them,

[1] Yellow Book, No. 136.

seemed disconcerted rather than deceived; apparently they accepted what we had to say. M. Romanos's dark eyes were gloomy, M. Vesnitch stammered vague explanations, M. Stancioff faltered feeble excuses. Meanwhile the three countries completed their mobilisation, and already Montenegro was brandishing a naked sword.

On the 3rd I motored with Sazonoff to Rambouillet, where the President received the Minister most affably, patted him on the back for his pacific bent, and kept us for luncheon, to which he had invited, among others, Isvolsky and Baron Schilling, director of M. Sazonoff's office, as well as Louis, who had come to France to welcome our guest, as Isvolsky had greeted me in Russia. At my luncheon the next day in honour of Sazonoff, he told our Ministers that if war broke out he hoped the Balkan States, and more especially Bulgaria, would be worsted. Europe could then see they were not brow-beaten, while their victory would upset everything.

Herr Kiderlen now asked me to draft a text setting out the suggestions which Sazonoff and I had put forward, as Germany feared that the Balkan States would open their mouths too wide. I asked Baron Schoen to call, when I told him that the Powers themselves might take in hand the execution of reforms, as M. Giers had proposed.

"The Secretary of State", Jules Cambon wrote, "was much impressed by the expression 'take in hand', which appeared to him to be a very happy phrase, for it satisfied everything while compromising nothing. If Your Excellency is prepared to draw up a formula of the declaration to be made by the Powers, or in their name, the Imperial Government think that the declaration should embody only (1) that if war were to break out between the Porte and the Balkan States, the Powers would not, at the termination of the conflict, allow any modification of the territorial *status quo* of the Balkans; (2) that the Great Powers would take in hand the execution of reforms in the administration of Macedonia, it being understood that such reforms would not in any way impair the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. The Secretary of State considers it of importance to give expression to this latter idea." [1]

[1] Yellow Book, No. 138.

Having agreed explicitly with the Russian Minister on a wording which took account of Kiderlen's observations, I asked the Powers whether they approved a collective or an Austro-Russian *démarche* in this sense, and France and Russia were thus in direct collaboration with Germany.[1]

Jules Cambon replied :

" The Secretary of State personally accorded a most favourable reception to the communication I made to him on your behalf, and informed me that the German Government would certainly approve the form of declaration proposed by Your Excellency ; and would be disposed to associate itself with collective action or to authorise action made on behalf of Europe by Austria and Russia ; but in such a case the approval of the German Emperor is necessary. He is telegraphing immediately to His Majesty and will give me his reply as soon as possible, this evening or to-morrow morning. The Secretary of State is going to telegraph also to Vienna, to urge the acceptance of your proposal. He considers, in fact, that the declaration ought to be made on Sunday, if possible."

So, subject to the Kaiser's approval, we were now in step with Germany and Russia, but England had not made up her mind as to reforms. Paul Cambon said that the immediate acceptance of our draft of the 22nd September would have arrested events, but energetic action at Constantinople would have been necessary. The British Government, he thought, was afraid of offending Turkey ; the Moslems of India were reproaching England for not having called a halt to Italy, and were jealously watching her present attitude. We ourselves had these scruples earlier, but now with Turkey generally threatened the Porte must throw away ballast,—this she might be persuaded to understand. England hesitated, however, and not unreasonably. Sir Edward Grey would take action with the Balkan States, but he reserved his reply on other points. I must try again.

Count Somssich, who called on behalf of Count Berchtold, said to me: " Gabriel Effendi has told the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador to the Porte that Turkey will refuse to consider a possible ultimatum by the Balkan States, but would assure the Powers as to reforms. She will introduce those

[1] Yellow Book, No. 141.

provided for in the 1880 law and will considerably augment the deputies representing the different nationalities."

That was a forward step of which I hastened to tell London and the other posts. But Paul Cambon telegraphed that he had seen Nicolson, who had heard from Sir Edward giving somewhat indefinite approval. Nicolson thought that while Russia and Austria might be left to handle the Balkan Governments, other Powers had special interests at Constantinople, which could not be left to "mandatories". "I replied to him", Cambon said, "that your suggestion only referred to the Balkan States, and that you were proposing action by the five Powers at Constantinople. I expressed my regret that Article 4 of your draft of 22nd September had not been accepted, and I proposed to request its return."

The German Emperor had, on the contrary, authorised his Government to accept the Franco-Russian formula. To satisfy England, I proposed that the *démarches* to the Balkan States should be undertaken by Austria and Russia and that the Powers should act at Constantinople.

Again the German Government made no objection, but Sir A. Nicolson, on his own responsibility and prior to a definite reply from the British Cabinet, made one observation. According to remarks made by Gabriel Effendi and by Kiamil Pacha to the British Ambassador, Sir Arthur thought that the Porte would consent to discuss the reforms with the Powers, but would not allow the Powers to put them in hand.

Cordial as the discussion was, it dragged on, and if Europe waited much longer, the fire would destroy everything before the arrival of the fire-engines. Berchtold had not yet given his reply, but in his optimism believed that two at least of the Balkan States were only too anxious to avoid a war, and he told Dumaine that he had just heard that Ferdinand, who was very undecided at the time of mobilisation, was waiting and hoping that intervention would save him from taking the field.

After several hours of reflection, Berchtold asked for some modifications in the proposed text, and he wanted the action at the Porte to be not simultaneous but collective.

Our diplomacy was rather like a game of patience or a Chinese puzzle. Sazonoff and I went into the Austrian amendments, which we thought should be accepted, "as much from the point of view of courtesy to the Austrian Government as conducing to rapid action in favour of peace". I so informed Dumaine, and sent the modified text to London, Berlin, Vienna and Rome.

England was told that Turkey had no longer any reason to feel hurt, as the new wording implied that no attack would be made on the integrity of the territories of the Ottoman Empire, nor indeed on the sovereignty of the Sultan: the essential point was that the Balkan States should in future put their trust in Europe and not in Turkey alone.

Thus, far from thwarting Austria in respect of her textual alterations, we indulged her caprice, with no other wish than to bring the matter to a finish. Germany was quick to approve, but England was against collective action at the Porte, and to spare Turkish feelings would only agree to a concerted *démarche* to the Balkans.

Meantime, the Turkish Government gave the Ambassadors to understand that they would initiate in European Turkey the reforms in Article 23 of the Treaty of Berlin and in the 1880 law of the Vilayets. Here Sir Edward Grey saw a new means to conciliate every one, and on the 17th Sir Francis Bertie brought me a note which weakened a little the text meticulously drawn up at Paris, in agreement with Berlin and St. Petersburg, amended at Vienna, and finally accepted by the four Powers:

"Sir Edward Grey suggests that the five Powers should inform the Porte that they note the public announcement of the intention of the Turkish Government to introduce reforms, and that they will immediately discuss with the Sublime Porte, in the spirit of Article 23 of the Treaty of Berlin, the suitable measures to be taken in order to assure their realisation in the interests of the populations; it being understood that these reforms shall not affect the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire."

"This text can stand if every one agrees", I said; "perhaps it is more flattering than ours to the Turkish

amour-propre, and, personally, I will back it to secure the *démarche* at Constantinople. Luckily I can have a talk with Sazonoff, as he is still in Paris. Only it must be understood that, as Sir Edward Grey points out, the Powers will immediately deal with the Porte as to the realisation of the reforms. If not, Europe, which has already waited thirty years for them, will probably have to wait thirty years more. You know the suspicious mind of the Turk: if we act separately, they will be sure to think that we are not in agreement or that one or another of the Powers is capable of *arrière-pensées*. A collective *démarche* seems far preferable, and I consider that Austria is right on this point."

Sir Edward eventually agreed to the collective *démarche* by the Ambassadors. Germany and Austria endorsed our compromise, and I could circularise our agents.

"*7th October*.—On the initiative of the Government of the Republic, the Russian, British, Austro-Hungarian, German and Italian Governments have adopted the following resolution:

"'The Russian and Austro-Hungarian Governments shall declare to the Balkan States—

"'That the Powers vigorously condemn any measure likely to lead to a rupture of the peace; that basing their action on Article 23 of the Treaties of Berlin, they will take in hand, in the interests of the populations, the realisation of reforms in the administration of Turkey in Europe, it being understood that these reforms shall not affect the sovereignty of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan and the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. This declaration, however, is without prejudice to the liberty of the Powers to study the reforms collectively and subsequently.

"'That, nevertheless, if war should break out between the Balkan States and the Ottoman Empire, they will not allow at the end of such war any modification of the territorial *status quo* of Turkey in Europe. The Powers shall make *démarches* collectively at the Sublime Porte, consonant with the preceding declaration.'"

Thus after many changes and chances the European agreement, largely the work of the Triple Entente and not a little of France, was realised.

The Government of the Republic had been unaware of the preparation of the Balkan treaties, and of the texts for a long time after they had been signed; it was still unaware even in 1912 of the exact rôle which Russia had played in the negotiation and in the conclusion of these ententes. What the French Government had known at St. Petersburg had impressed it profoundly. Faced with a *fait accompli*, we had complained to Russia, shown her the dangers of these war conventions, and had begged her to prevent their being put into effect. The French Government knew the Emperor, M. Kokovtzoff and M. Sazonoff to be sincerely anxious to prevent even a localised war, and would do nothing liable to imperil an alliance which had for twenty years been a pledge of security for France. But the French Government had promised itself to re-establish the European concert as to the Eastern question; it had worked unceasingly and in daily relations with the great Powers, particularly with Germany and Austria, and in spite of many opposing interests, rival influences and silly quarrels arising out of national or personal vanity, it had finally succeeded.

Unsolicited tribute to the French Government was paid by organs of such varying colour as the Viennese *Fremdenblatt* and *Reichspost*, the German *Post* and *Gazette de Voss*, and the English *Times*.

In Rome one heard the opinion expressed that even if war were not warded off the entente would enable Europe to intervene quickly and authoritatively. The Marquis de San Giuliano said to M. Laroche that he thought that even if the proposed measures did not fend off war, this entente would enable Europe to intervene early on and authoritatively after the first engagements, and would facilitate peace-making.

André Tardieu dilated in the *Temps* on "the justice, prudence and courage" of our conciliatory action, and all the French newspapers published approving articles. "The agreement of six Powers", Jaurès affirmed, "is a happy and important fact; we must congratulate French diplomacy on having taken the initiative in this kind of mediation".

Sazonoff went home on the 7th October easy and almost

joyous ; news as to the Italo-Turkish war was better, and there was a rumour that the Ouchy negotiators had arrived at a complete understanding.

Alas ! on this day came a note from M. Venizelos, President of the Greek Council. He thanked Sazonoff and me for our active sympathy for the Christian populations, but insisted that the constitution guaranteed to Samos by the Powers should be re-established, and that the appointment of a Commissioner-General for Crete was not sufficient. " The firm attitude of the four Balkan States ", he said, " is a result of the intolerable position of the Christians, who, instead of repeatedly promised reforms, see their fate daily becoming more miserable, and who are threatened with complete destruction. Greece really cannot abandon her co-nationalists in Turkey in Europe, even in order to settle definitely the Cretan question."

I told M. Romanos, who brought the note, that this was why we asked for the collective gesture at Constantinople, and suggested that Greece and her allies should await its result.

From Sofia, Panafieu telegraphed to me :

" The Sobranje voted, yesterday, the 6th October, the bills submitted by the Government which involve credits of about 80 millions. The President of the Council explained the situation in a few words which were loudly applauded, and added that the Government had decided to pursue its policy to the end. Parliament is to adjourn to-day *sine die*."

Bompard, on his return to Pera from Therapia, heard on the 7th October that the Montenegrin Chargé d'Affaires had been instructed to inform the Foreign Minister that the next day, at noon, as the outstanding questions between Montenegro and Turkey had not been settled, King Nicolas would spring to arms.

A few hours later Bompard confirmed this ugly news. He asked the Chargé d'Affaires why Montenegro, the smallest of the Balkan Powers, had made this start. The Montenegrins thought this had been decided upon by the Allies, who, thinking they were going to be stopped, and having decided not to give way, could not do otherwise than make

the *casus foederis* operative by opening hostilities between one of themselves and Turkey. According to this diplomatist, Montenegro has naturally been chosen because her grievances and her demands in respect of frontier questions differed sharply from those of the other Balkan States; the explanation was not improbable. King Nicholas, like the Black Mountain, was pregnant with surprises and full of precipices.

Bompard held that the promise of the Porte to introduce reforms provided for in the old law of the vilayets was being stoutly opposed by Turkish public opinion. Students of the Constantinople University were noisy with "Long live the War: no Treaty of Berlin! No concessions because of threats!" and the Grand Vizier, accompanied by his son, had failed with a harangue to silence these youthful patriots. His windows had been broken by stones, and troops had to be used to disperse the demonstrators.

Guéchoff intimated to the Austrian and Russian Ministers at Sofia that the *démarche* was a fortnight too late, and that the question of who was to control the execution of reforms not mentioned in the Note was of first-rate importance. Bulgaria was apparently trying to outstrip Europe, to drag Serbia with her and push Montenegro in front; the wily Ferdinand had apparently backed both tableaux and was trying to break the bank.

M. Pachitch, at Belgrade, affirmed that Montenegro's declaration of war had been made on the 8th October without the Allies having had preliminary discussions, and this was probably the truth. Anyhow, the last chance of preventing war lay in Austria's and Russia's steps in the Balkans and the Powers' insistence at Constantinople; if it were too late to prevent local hostilities, it was vital to maintain the European entente.[1]

Count Berchtold was now a little shaky and was rather self-contradictory before the Austrian Delegation on the 9th October, and the Hungarian Delegation on the 10th. In his first declaration he remarked "that Austrian policy

[1] "The only reassuring feature is that France and Germany have been loyally united in a supreme effort to prevent war" (Jaurès).

was devoted, at one and the same time, to the higher interests of the Monarchy and to the cause of peace". In the second, he seemed despondent and not over-confident in the European concert. Moreover, he alluded to "the special interests of Austria-Hungary in the Balkans" and announced the determination "to defend them in all circumstances",[1] a phrase interpreted in the Vienna Press as a sign Austria had resumed full liberty of action. Dumaine said the Count seemed irresolute, afraid of his task, overwhelmed by his work, and ready to follow any lead.[2]

The French Government, however, were determined to prevent the rupture of the union which we had helped to create. While Berchtold was holding this sibylline language, Count Szecsen, the Austrian Ambassador, told me that in reply to the Austro-Russian address Guéchoff would have to consult Ferdinand and the Council of Ministers.[3] Guéchoff wanted to know whether the expression "take in hand" the reforms implied effective control by the Powers, and how such control would be exercised.

"The reply is easy," I said. "The collective *démarche* to-day at Constantinople, in the sense of the British proposal, is based on Article 23 of the Treaty of Berlin and on the 1880 Ottoman law. The British Cabinet has proposed that the Powers should immediately discuss with the Porte the realisation of the reforms specified in that law. You are aware that the document in question comprises no less than three hundred and twenty Articles. Moreover, the aspect of certain problems has changed in the last thirty-two years. It seems to me that the most expeditious way would be for the Powers to discuss these proposed reforms in a diplomatic conference. I am about to sound Great Britain and Russia on this subject."[4]

Sir Edward was all for bringing Austria and Russia into a conference whose labours would exclude anything tending to impair the territorial integrity of the Ottoman

[1] Vienna, 10th October, No. 257.
[2] Despatch of 11th October, No. 258.
[3] 10th October.
[4] 10th October.

Empire; the British Minister only asked that we should await the reply of the Sublime Porte to the Powers' communication. If an immediate discussion of reforms were approved by Turkey, the Ottoman Government would take part in the diplomatic conference. If the Sublime Porte would not agree to a discussion, the Ambassadors at Constantinople could then hold a conference amongst themselves and study the question of the régime to be established in Turkey in Europe after the restoration of peace.[1]

This was good. "*My task*", I now wrote, "*is to preserve the solidarity of Europe* and to prevent divergences of views from becoming dangerous".[2] Cambon replied that Sir Edward was one with me on European solidarity,[3] and I begged him to thank the Secretary of State "for the valuable assistance which the British Government is affording in maintaining general peace", and to assure him that "the French Government, for their part, have never doubted their fidelity to the European entente, nor their friendly sentiments towards France".[4]

If war broke out, and even if localised in the Balkans, I could see that French policy would coincide rather with that of Britain than of Russia. Russia was already exasperated with Austria, and Sazonoff might not be able to resist a general feeling. To complicate matters, the report was current that peace pourparlers had just been abruptly broken off between Italy and Turkey, that the Italian fleet would renew hostilities in the Archipelago, and that the Turks proposed to close the Dardanelles again.

Sazonoff no longer thought of how to avert war but of how to end it;[5] the Powers must call a halt after the first fights; the Imperial Government believed that the Balkan States could not stand a long war, and if they got into a mess Russian opinion would be clamorous to help them.

[1] Yellow Book, 11th October, No. 175.
[2] Yellow Book, 12th October, No. 176.
[3] Yellow Book, 12th October, No. 179.
[4] Yelow Book, No. 180.
[5] Telegram from M. Doulcet, St. Petersburg, 12th October, No. 465.

I told Isvolsky [1] that I concurred. "We must leave no stone unturned to prevent actual fighting, and Bulgaria must be told the Powers were about to talk reforms at an international conference." [2]

The promise of reforms was sadly belated. The news from Sofia and Belgrade was no better, and Tittoni reported unfavourably as to the negotiations at Ouchy. Italy turned away from the Porte's new demands; she had fixed a final time limit and, failing a definite reply on the 15th, would renew the fight. With the newspapers full of "Rupture at Ouchy; outbreak in the Balkans", we must not relax our efforts nor be discouraged. After consultation with Sir Edward, I telegraphed to Jules Cambon and Dumaine:

"You should urgently propose to the Government to which you are accredited the adoption of the following programme: (1) If the Ottoman Government agree to discuss with the Powers the reforms to be introduced in European Turkey, an international conference will immediately be held for the purpose of studying and applying these reforms. (2) If the Ottoman Government refuse a discussion, and war breaks out, the Powers will immediately concert with a view to mediation. (3) If mediation fails, the international conference will be held in order that, on the termination of hostilities, such measures may be taken as the interests of peace and the common interests of Europe demand." [3]

That same evening, the reply of the Balkan States was sent to the Austrian and Russian Ministers. The Allies were grateful to the Powers as to reform, but "the Ottoman Government have not fulfilled the repeated promises they made, and the Christian populations of Macedonia remain in their wretched condition. The Allies are therefore obliged to demand definite and solemn pledges from the Ottoman

[1] M. Isvolsky telegraphed to M. Sazonoff: "M. Poincaré is firmly determined energetically to continue his task of uniting the European Powers in averting the still more dangerous consequences which might ensue from the present crisis".

[2] Yellow Book, No. 181.

[3] Yellow Book, 18th October, No. 182. I communicated this programme also to M. Sazonoff, apologising for my inability, on account of the urgency, to warn him of it before addressing Vienna and Berlin.

Government. These pledges are enumerated in a note consisting of nine paragraphs. The Porte will be asked to undertake them, to put them into immediate execution, and to demobilise." [1] In other words, the Balkan States made a polite bow to us.

Our military attaché at Sofia reported the Bulgarian army as ready for the field on the 16th, and that Ferdinand was starting for Starazagora and would join the troops; contingents to stiffen the Serbs had been entraining at Sofia and were being sent to Kustendil.

On the morning of 14th October the Sublime Porte handed to the Austrian Ambassador, the doyen of the diplomatic corps at Constantinople, their evasive and far-fetched reply to the Note. The Imperial Government thanked Europe for her intentions, affirmed that they had anticipated them, declared that they had of their own accord resolved with the next Parliament to present the Bill of 1880 "in all its historic entirety", and promised that the law should be scrupulously applied when it had been passed and had received the assent of the Sultan; in other words, at the Ottoman calends.

Vienna became daily more anti-Russian, and the story ran that the Czar would replace Sazonoff by a militant Pan-Slavist.[2]

Sir Edward told Cambon that he now saw little hope of effective intervention,[3] and Kiderlen told Jules Cambon that he must await the final decision of the Austro-Hungarian Government. Cambon wrote to me: "The Secretary of State considers that the war will allow the Powers to espouse the cause of one side. He wants to keep his hands free. Germany will place herself on the side of the conqueror." [4]

A few hours later Berchtold came out of his shell. Sazonoff smelt a rat in Vienna's silence and warned Austria that, if she intervened in arms, Russia could not merely look on. Berchtold gave the express assurance that, even

[1] Telegram from M. de Panafieu, 13th October, No. 116.
[2] M. Dumaine, 14th and 15th October, Nos. 215 and 217.
[3] From M. Paul Cambon, 14th October 1912, No. 311.
[4] From M. Jules Cambon, 14th October 1912, Nos. 343-345.

if Serbia entered the Sanjak of Novi-Bazar, Austria-Hungary would invade neither Serbian territory nor the Sanjak, but this on condition that the Powers would allow no post-war change in the existing frontiers. "I give you my word of honour", Berchtold said to the Russian Ambassador, "that Austria has not made and is not making any preparation for war on the Balkan frontier". Sazonoff was highly pleased and would have liked Europe to have a last try at Sofia, which Sir Edward Grey thought impossible;[1] war seemed inevitable, and we must try to limit its dimensions and duration. With the concurrence of London and St. Petersburg, I communicated to the Powers the project which is given in the Yellow Book,[2] and telegraphed to Berlin:

"I entirely agree with Herr von Kiderlen as to the necessity for the European Cabinets to exchange their views on the course to be followed at the conclusion of hostilities. It is solely with that object that I have asked you to submit to the Imperial Government the outline of an understanding in view of eventual mediation, which, if successful, would be followed by a conference, the whole on the basis of the territorial *status quo*."[3]

We must stick as long as possible to the *status quo*, to keep Austria immobile, but the fate of the Balkans was now to be decided by the sword.

In the thick of these troubles I wanted to settle a debt of conscience to England. When Sazonoff had tardily communicated the Serbo-Bulgarian Agreement to me at St. Petersburg, he asked me to keep it secret. I naturally replied that I must inform the French Government, and I also told Paul Cambon, who agreed with me as to the mistakes made. Now that the dangerous potentialities of the Balkan Conventions had developed, I no longer felt justified in keeping anything back from the British Cabinet, and I penned a long despatch for Paul Cambon to present.[4]

I said how Sazonoff and Isvolsky had for a long time concealed from us the import of the Balkan agreements; how on several occasions they had made unsuccessful repre-

[1] Telegram from Paris to M. Paul Cambon, No. 745.
[2] No. 183. [3] 15th October, No. 576. [4] Yellow Book, No. 184.

sentations to me in favour of the Bulgarian Loan ; how I had learned the truth at St. Petersburg ; how I had felt compelled to keep the secret entrusted to me ; how Isvolsky himself had since acknowledged that the Bulgarians had everywhere been retailing a little information about the document in question ; and finally how, in circumstances which might at any moment compel Great Britain and France to combine more closely in their pacific endeavours, I must not leave the British Government any longer in ignorance of the truth.

Paul Cambon was to tell all this to Sir Edward in confidence.

"You should inform him that I by no means question the sincerity of the pacific intentions of the Russian Government. M. Sazonoff and M. Isvolsky evidently did not believe that the rapprochement between the Serbs and the Bulgarians would have as its immediate effect the concerted mobilisation provided for by the convention. They imagined that the arbitration of Russia could be exercised in the direction of peace right up to the day when Russia might consider war opportune ; and they truly believed that day was far distant. When you saw M. Sazonoff in London, he was convinced that war would not break out and that Bulgaria would go no further than mere manifestations. His language was from the very beginning tinged with a strange optimism and which went far to mutilate my proposals of 2nd September ; but if Russian diplomacy failed in foresight, it is now bent, so far as Russian public opinion allows, on remedying the evil. Sazonoff and Isvolsky have openly said that, if war broke out, the victory of the Turks should be hoped for, as Turkey's progress could always be arrested, whereas any marked success of Bulgaria would entail action by Austria."

Some of my colleagues advised me to delay the communication and first tell Isvolsky that we were asking Sazonoff to divulge it himself in London as promptly as possible, and that, if he refused, we must do so ourselves. I asked Daeschner to telegraph or telephone and ask Paul Cambon to suspend action, and then made Isvolsky promise to ask Sazonoff to inform the British Government himself.

But Isvolsky did not hurry, and I wrote to the Russian Minister myself that "if the British Government learn indirectly of the essential provisions of this, in my opinion,

dangerous agreement, they will accuse Russia of imprudence, and even of dissimulation. A hundred times better to explain to England at once how things happened, and inform them, as you explained to me, that you neither prepared nor approved the clauses of the convention, notably those relating to your arbitration. If you do not consider yourself able to furnish this information to London direct, I am prepared to pass it on myself to the British Government, with all the circumspection necessary in order not to lead to friction between you and them."

Sazonoff was taken aback. He had always told us that he had been a stranger to the agreements and that they had been produced to Russia ready made. At the time, I had no proof of the collaboration of Russian agents at Belgrade and Sofia, respecting which M. Guéchoff was to publish precise details later on. But the Minister probably knew all there was to be known. He fell in with my opinion, however, and on 3rd November he telegraphed to me that he was at once giving instructions to London to inform Sir E. Grey, when Paul Cambon could at once repair to him and Sir Arthur Nicolson.

CHAPTER XXI

Success of Balkan Allies—Self-deception at Vienna and Berlin—Sazonoff's programme—Disinterestedness clause—Projects for mediation—From day to day—Rout of the Turks.

My letters to Paul Cambon, Sazonoff and Isvolsky may go to show up Russia's mistakes and all that the Sofia agreements did to bring about the Balkan War. Russia, however, put on the brake so soon as she saw the possibility of a collision, and (except Montenegro) the Balkan States did not give the final push which rendered that collision inevitable. It was Turkey, who, after evasive replies to Europe, recalled her Ministers from Athens, Belgrade and Sofia, and rejected the Balkan Note without offering any sort of guarantee for reforms promised through thirty-two years. Mukhtar Pasha, who foresaw a Turkish defeat, said his countrymen were intoxicated by opinions in Germany, Austria, and even in England. The fuss made about Mahmoud Shevet had led part of the world astray.[1]

[1] M. Giollotti writes in his memoirs: "Every one thought that Turkey would easily defeat the petty Balkan States and that a European conference would then clear things up". Mukhtar Pasha states that Constantinople suspected Austria of being behind the Albanian rising, whose policy roused the suspicions even of her German ally. Germany herself since Kiderlen had hold of power was far from being sincere in her line of action, as has been admitted by Germans themselves (Memoirs of Naumann, Berlin, 1920).

The ex-Turkish Minister of Marine, who was also Turkish Ambassador at Berlin (Mukhtar Pasha) adds he always thought that the Central Powers could have stopped the war but would not do this because they thought that Turkey would be victorious. Hollweg told him that the Germans would have acted differently had they entertained any doubt of the issue. Jonescu bears similar witness, but states that Austria had an arrangement with Bulgaria so as to be ready for all eventualities: "The victory of Bulgaria amazed her, but it was the victory of Serbia which set her beside herself".

France held no brief for either Turkey or the Balkan States, and strove impartially for peace: full justice was done to this in the Austrian and German Press,[1] and the Bulgarian Minister, on leaving to join the army, thanked me for all we had tried to do to smooth things down. Kiderlen showed growing uneasiness about Sazonoff's position, fearing that a new Pan-Slavist movement would bring about his fall, and he lamented loudly to Cambon what he called the "Montenegrin" influence at St. Petersburg—this in allusion to the two Grand Duchesses, daughters of King Nicholas—but he had no tears for the disagreements which he anticipated between Russia and England.

The Bulgarian proclamation invoking the memory of the "Liberator" Czar, and stirring up the Orthodox against the Mussulmans, appeared to him a defiance of a Moslem Empire such as Great Britain. "If the Bulgars arrive at San Stefano the Russians and English won't see eye to eye", was the Foreign Secretary's pleasant comment passed on to me by Cambon, and suggesting a new bogey. Almost every hour we seemed to be talking with one or another Power. Berchtold congratulated the French Government on being the "undisputed bandmaster of the European concert": he was confessedly nervous of some outburst of Pan-Slavism, and, like Kiderlen, thought that Sazonoff might be unable to stem Russian public opinion; the Czar, so Louis telegraphed, had set his mind on peace. Whilst the diplomatists were talking the Serbs and Bulgars were marching to victory. The Austrians were much upset about this,[2] as they had expected the Turks to score a success, when things could have been made easier. A Turkish military triumph would have given the victors no territorial claims, and they would still have been forced to give reforms to Macedonia; with the Serbs in Prishtina and Novi-Bazar, and the Greeks going ahead, things would not pan out to Austria's liking. Szoegenyi, so I was informed, hurried from Berlin to declare

[1] The *Fremdenblatt*, official organ of the Ballplatz, and the *Neues Wiener Journal* paid daily homage to the peace efforts of the Paris Cabinet, and on 15th October the *Cologne Gazette* opined "that the French line of policy contributed to permanent contact between the Great Powers".

[2] Letter from M. Dumaine, 22nd October.

that Germany would do her best to keep Austria and Russia from falling out, but if she failed to do this she must stand by her official ally. Berchtold then proceeded to Pisa, where mutual promises were exchanged with the Italian Foreign Minister for the renewal of the Triplice. Kiderlen, ruefully contemplating the total defeat of the Turks,[1] now pressed upon the British Ambassador the mutual interests of England, France and Germany, and told him to put it to his Government that Germany was in touch with France, and would like a word with England. But there was apt to be something behind Kiderlen's more amiable words, and he now insinuated that England, France and Germany should confer as to how they could satisfy the Balkan States without impairing the integrity of the Ottoman Empire : the German Government would arrange this with Vienna, England would fix it up with France, and Russia[2] should be told. Jules Cambon telegraphed that the Bulgarian successes came as a great surprise to Berlin, where it was also feared that Austria might do something which would involve Germany ; this, he thought, partly explained the Kiderlen proposal. I agreed with Jules Cambon that we must not only "tell" Russia but we ought to consult her, just as Berlin would consult Vienna, otherwise we should be abandoning the rôle of an ally for that of a mediator, just what Louis and de Selves so justly blamed Isvolsky for doing in 1911. I told Jules Cambon that of course I was willing to continue our conversation with the Imperial Government, and to concert with them as with other Powers as to some mediation at the earliest possible date ; only I said it might not be prudent to do anything without first getting into touch with England and Russia. Kiderlen, according to Jules Cambon, was still hopeful, but doubtful, as to a Turkish success; but German policy had sustained a blow, and Kiderlen's anxiety to open conversations between the Cabinets, indicated his fear that events would move quicker than the Chancelleries.

"As Your Excellency points out," Cambon thus con-

[1] Despatch, Berlin, 25th October, No. 364.
[2] Yellow Book, No. 200.

cluded a long despatch, "it is essential for us to keep closest touch with Russia and Great Britain; but St Petersburg and London see things from such different angles that it may be difficult to make their points of view fit in."

Sazonoff did not entirely turn Kiderlen down;[1] he considered the moment was not yet ripe for intervention, but would be with some decisive stroke such as the fall of Adrianople. He was for determining in advance the principle upon which intervention should be based, and believed Austria had already abandoned the territorial *status quo*, and would do much to gain the confidence of Bulgaria. Russia was perforce disinterested, and was satisfied to leave Constantinople to the Turks, but it would be war within twenty-four hours should any one else lay a finger on it.[2]

Sazonoff's programme sketched by Isvolsky to Paléologue (26th October) provided for the upkeep of Turkish power in the Constantinople region, and a nominal suzerainty of the Sultan over the other provinces, with reforms under direct control of the Great Powers. Sir Edward Grey, informed by me of the German proposal, agreed that it was not advisable to move without Russia, and that in any case it was too soon for an intervention. Germany and Austria would like to check the advance of the Balkan States, who seemed to have one success after another; Russia and England preferred for the moment to leave them a free field. Meanwhile the capture of Uskub had fired the Serbs, and having broken their bounds they felt themselves masters of the whole Peninsula.

At Nantes on 26th October I was able to say that Italy, her own weary warfare accomplished, could join us as peacemakers, and I claimed for the Government that all good Republicans must endorse our efforts to constitute a European conference which could deal with an inflamed situation, efforts which in no sort of way traversed our

[1] Kiderlen had made a concession to Balkan pretensions: he now only spoke of respecting the *principle* of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. I reminded Sazonoff of this in advising him to let us make a start with mediation. This was to satisfy Kiderlen without wounding the *amour propre* of our ally.

[2] Conversation reported in three telegrams from Louis, 28th October.

alliances and ententes. "A peaceful nation," I urged, "which does not know how to make itself respected, must be at the mercy of any stroke of fortune, and so long as there are peoples devoted to warlike ideals, the seekers after peace must be prepared for anything and everything." The speech was approved everywhere in the European Press, the Anglophobe Judet alone dubbing the Triple Entente as an "artificial combination", and lamenting that I had accepted this heavy legacy from preceding cabinets.[1]

In the Balkans the war moved to its crisis. The Turks were beaten at Lule Burgos; Plievlie fell to the Serbs; there were successes at Veles, at Kumanovo, and the Greeks were no less fortunate—though time scarcely confirmed our military attaché's glowing notes. Constantine was said to have removed all pro-German elements from his staff and entourage, and the Greeks proclaimed him a second Philip of Macedon! Poor Macedonia! Poor Philip!

The Turkish defeat struck chill in Berlin, and Cambon wrote that it spelt the collapse of Germany's twenty year old Eastern policy, and that she was straining every nerve to stave off a clash between Austria and Russia. Two days later, on the 26th October, Cambon, quite unnecessarily apologising for so adding to the weight of my correspondence, wrote:

"The Balkan success has had for the German Government the effect of a stunning blow on the nape of the neck, and as at the head of the Government there is perhaps a man who appreciates concrete facts better than any one I have ever known, they are looking round to see on which side they should come down: the taste for success which is so strong with the Germans makes them a little contemptuous of the Turks, and this is why Austria and Germany seem to be preparing to play the part of the gardener's dog. The geographical situation of the Balkan States is such that Russia might find in their friendship a very powerful weapon against Austria at the critical hour, and it is clear that the question is being asked in Berlin whether in case of a general war there could be assigned to these States the part which it was proposed Turkey should play."

[1] The *Times* said: ". . . The sentiments so eloquently expressed at Nantes have been nowhere more favourably or more promptly acclaimed than in England".

On 29th October I asked Cambon to inform the Imperial Government that I agreed as to the necessity of England and France being in touch, but that we must consult Russia. Kiderlen replied that of course Russia must be consulted, but that common ground must be found between Russia and Austria, and that this was a duty which naturally devolved upon other Powers; also that what the Balkan States had managed to do must not be read as a purely "Slav success". Kiderlen noted a curious change of spirit, particularly in England; "no one", he observed, "spoke any more of the *status quo*, nor even of the 'Christians', but of 'Slav Independence', as if there were no Roumanians, Greeks, Albanians and Turks in the Balkans".[1]

Sazonoff now unfolded his programme. He clung to the shadow of Turkish sovereignty in the Balkans, and would preserve the *Valis* with only ornamental functions. Justice, however, was to be administered independently of the Sublime Porte, and control of the reforms was to vest in the Ambassadors of the Great Powers: full Turkish sovereignty was to be limited by a line drawn from the mouth of the Maritza to the Black Sea via Adrianople: no annexations were suggested in favour of Greece, Serbia or Bulgaria. It was the last remnant of the well-worn *status quo*. Sazonoff hoped that France would accept this basis for mediation, but, the day after, a new Russian Note came along. Events were moving with bewildering rapidity. According to the Bulgarian Minister at St. Petersburg, Austria had offered to help Bulgaria with money and arms and would not frown on accessions in territory. This was obviously a move to drive in a wedge between Bulgaria and Serbia and split up the Balkan League. Sazonoff suggested that any mediation between the belligerents should be based on "disinterestedness", and that radical reforms should be introduced into Turkey in Europe up to Adrianople.

Ferdinand, running from Russia to Austria, was putting himself up to the highest bidder, and the old rivalry between Vienna and St. Petersburg blazed out anew. Sazonoff took by no means kindly to territorial changes; his

[1] Telegram from Cambon, 29th October, Nos. 377 and 378.

Government thought that the great danger of any change in the *status quo* would lie in the difficulty which there would then be of preventing Austria and the other Powers from requiring compensation. I agreed that Russia and Austria might now well declare themselves "disinterested", but I had scarcely digested the Russian note when Louis telegraphed the hopelessness of maintaining the *status quo*; Russia could not do less than Austria for the Balkan States, and Sazonoff left it to me to propose mediation without defining exact conditions, but Russia would not refuse even the very open-mouthed Balkan demands. Thus the Allies not only won battles in the Balkans but stamped themselves on Austria, Russia, and even England. Paul Cambon reminded us of British sympathies for the Macedonian Christians, of Gladstone's campaign on the "Bulgarian atrocities" in 1897, and the pro-Armenian agitation of 1894.[1]

The Austrian Ambassador, who was daily on my doorstep, was with me just as I was sending the declaration accepted by London and St. Petersburg to Vienna and Berlin, and he rather jibbed at the idea of absolute Austrian "disinterestedness". The changes in Macedonia were no less important for Austria than a Bulgarian occupation of Constantinople would be for England and Russia. Austria could not be "disinterested" in changes which the Balkans would wish to make in the valley of the Vardar. I reminded him of the declaration by England and Russia, the principal object of which was to ensure the immediate intervention desired by the Austrian Government. Count Szecsen seemed to assimilate my argument, but meanwhile Berchtold was telling Dumaine[2] that he could not accept a formula of absolute "disinterestedness", which would mean the surrender of any influencing the Balkan States. When Dumaine reminded him that the formula merely applied to territorial annexations and was wholly agreeable to the other Powers, Berchtold asked for time to reflect. I had no difficulty in foreseeing the objections likely to be

[1] Despatch, 30th October, No. 468.
[2] Telegram from Vienna, 31st October, No. 232.

raised, and had already asked Dumaine [1] to elicit what conditions Berchtold wanted for participation in a collective action. If Austria repelled our suggestions it was plain that she was meditating some action " on her own " which would endanger the peace of Europe. Dumaine did not believe that the formula " absolute disinterestedness " would be accepted by Austria, who was hungry for the Sanjak up to Mitrovitza should she be unable to prevent the aggrandisement of Serbia.[2]

Roumania now had a word to say. The King, in a long interview with our Minister, said he would claim no territory if Ferdinand did not. Otherwise Roumania must have a slight rectification of her frontier, and in the event of a European conference she would be vocal as to her rights.[3]

There now occurred an incident at Berlin. Could it have been that Wilhelmstrasse deciphered telegrams from St. Petersburg to Paris and saw Sazonoff's phrase as to Kiderlen's " tortuous character " ? or merely that Isvolsky had chattered too freely ? Anyhow, Kiderlen alluded to an " indiscretion " without giving details, and complained of the hostility which Russia and her ally had shown to his recent step. Cambon had little difficulty in appeasing the temporary peevishness of the Secretary of State, whose nerves were on edge by the Balkan successes and who very quickly looked things in the face and forgot Sazonoff's acid drops. While Kiderlen was more and more worried by the vagaries of Austria, Berchtold from day to day seemed more and more rickety. He now thought it inopportune to propose mediation, but promised to give a definite answer after consulting Rome and Berlin. What did all this mean ? Dumaine was sadly put about,[4] and in London Sir Edward Grey was no less vexed and no better informed. In fact there was as much trouble in St. Petersburg as in Vienna, and if Germany complained of Austria's indecision, our lot was no happier with Russia.

[1] 31st October, No. 487.
[2] Telegram from Vienna, 31st October, No. 233.
[3] Telegram from Bucarest, 31st October, No. 26.
[4] Telegram, No. 234, 1st November.

Demands, alternated with advice, poured in from the Pont du Chantre. It was a tableau of daily contradictions. Sir Edward Grey was right; Sazonoff, who was both intelligent and far-seeing, was more free to deal with London and Paris when he had not to reckon at close quarters with the fluctuating opinion of his own vast and mysterious country.

CHAPTER XXII

Silence at Vienna and disquiet at St. Petersburg—Turkey appeals to Europe—Serbia and access to the sea—Opposition of Austria—*Exposé* of French policy.

On the 1st of November Isvolsky was at the Quai d'Orsay with a message from Sazonoff, who wanted France and England each to advise Bulgaria not to push on any farther towards Constantinople. The Imperial Government was presumably tortured by the thought of Ferdinand making a state entry into St. Sophia. I told Isvolsky that a remonstrance of this sort would be as useless as dangerous. "Call off Bulgaria yourselves if you think there is any use in so doing," I said. "You have always declared that Bulgaria shall have no foothold in Constantinople, but don't ask us to hurt the Balkan feelings by stopping them when they are winning; nor should we do anything piecemeal." [1]

Austrian silence and Russian oscillations made me have another try to reconcile the policy of the two countries. I asked Sazonoff and Sir Edward if they saw any harm in France studying with the Powers some plan to curtail the fighting; Sir Edward was nothing loth, only suggesting we ought to feel correctly the pulse of Austria and Russia before bringing about a conference. Austria, however, insisted that mediation must follow a request by the belligerents and, according to Panafieu, Guéchof had said that the allied states having won had no need to demand mediation. "Turkey must do this, and if the request is transmitted to us we will listen to it." The Turkish forces were now in utter rout, the Bulgarians coming down the

[1] Count Benckendorff made the same suggestion to Sir Edward Grey with much the same answer.

right bank of the Maritza had reached Demolika. Prizrend had fallen to the triumphant Serbs, Grevena to the jubilant Greeks.

Tittoni confided to me that Berchtold's change of front, which had rather surprised me, was due to Germany, who was now vetoing intervention unless asked for by the belligerents. It was difficult to square Germany's views.

On the 3rd November the Turkish Foreign Minister told Bompard rather indefinitely that he thought the Powers might do something;[1] an armistice, he urged, would prevent further bloodshed and make for peace. Louis reported active huckstering among the Allies—with Bulgaria well to the fore—to determine peace preliminaries. Sofia wanted something done quickly, and faced the necessity of making a "sorrowful sacrifice" to Roumania.

But what was Austria really driving at in the Balkans? The Roumanian Minister at Berlin spoke to Cambon of advances made by the Dual Monarchy to Serbia to set up a customs union with its petty neighbour;[2] the Bulgarian Minister in London believed in a probable rapprochement between Austria and his country.[3] From Athens came new intrigues. Berchtold was busy with Serbia and Albania, and had sent a staff-officer to follow the military operations.[4] Could Cambon's fears be well grounded? Was Austria trying to pull the Balkan States into the orbit of the Triple Alliance? Had Russia made the Sofia conventions only to make easy the German march to the East?

Happily the two European groups were in touch, and when Turkey asked for warships to be sent to the Black Sea to keep order, we had no difficulty with Germany. I told Bompard that one of our warships should go to Besika Bay and the French Commandant should confer with the English and German Commandants.[5] But Germany just now seemed to be in tow of her ally. She let Austria throw over the "disinterested" formula, and for this she was later

[1] No. 541 from Pera, received 4th November.
[2] Telegram, Jules Cambon, No. 392.
[3] Telegram, M. de Fleuriau, No. 330.
[4] Telegram, Athens, No. 107.
[5] Telegram, Paris to Berlin, No. 618, 3rd November.

blamed by Prince Lichnowsky, her Ambassador to St. James's. Although "disinterestedness" had been defined as territorial, the Austrian Press professed to see in the formula the repudiation of all economic and moral interests of the Habsburg monarchy in the Balkan Peninsula, and Germany modestly ranged herself behind her "brilliant second".

We proposed mediation, but got conflicting answers, even Italy affirming—without great risk—the solidarity of the Triple Alliance, and falling into line with Berlin and Vienna.[1]

Where was the "bandmaster" of whom Berchtold had spoken? Austria's refusal to admit territorial "disinterestedness" had a bad effect on the Press here. The Cabinet asked me to think out with England and Russia what we should do if Austria tried to realise further territorial aggrandisements. Isvolsky, without giving me the text of the Racconigi agreements, told me that Italy, like Russia, opposed the extension of any great Power in the Balkans, and it was obvious that Austrian ambitions would serve to unleash those of the Slavs. Both must be checked; or else, if Germany supported Austria and attacked Russia, we must fulfil our duty as an ally or else break with her once and for all.

I telegraphed to London and wrote to Isvolsky, reiterating both the opposition of France to any annexations of Ottoman territory by a Great Power, and our wish for concerted precautions against this danger.[2]

Isvolsky sent Sazonoff my note, his despatch beginning with the significant phrase, "after having reported the peculiarly cordial relations between France and Germany". What has happened to this letter? It is neither in the Black Book nor in the German publications. Its disappearance suggests a wish to travesty our policy prior to the Great War. In any case there was no new development in French policy, merely a desire to avert a collision between Austria and Russia. Should we avert it? Nothing could be

[1] Telegram, M. Barrère, No. 625.
[2] Black Book, Vol. I. p. 343.

less certain. News came from the Intelligence Section of the General Staff that Austria was buying all the coal available in the Ruhr: Austria and Roumania were secretly planning to mobilise: Roumania would possibly attack Bulgaria, giving Austria a pretext to join in: the Austrian Press was addressing solemn warnings to the Serbs not to push their troops west of Prizrend.

We sent telegrams from capital to capital. Kiderlen warned me that two German warships were leaving for Mersina and Käipha, and asked me to show our flag in Asia Minor.[1] But while we were arranging this little display San Giuliano arrived at Berlin, and Germany began to negotiate with Italy and Austria the renewal of the Triple Alliance. Kiderlen proceeded to speak of the future of Albania; and Cambon wrote that Italy did not turn down the Austrian suggestion that Albania should be an independent principality under a Moslem prince.

Meanwhile news came from Sazonoff. It was not enough to maintain the Sultan's sovereignty in Constantinople and its suburbs, it must be "Constantinople and region"!

Whilst Austria protected nascent Albania, Russia was concerned with the Narrows, and demanded anew that the Powers should prevent the entry of the Bulgar army into Stamboul. That was an obsession with Sazonoff. He knew Ferdinand, and was sure that in grandiose dreams the Bulgar king already saw himself entering St. Sophia amid the applause of the Orthodox, and reaching out for the crown of the eastern emperors. He meant to nip these hopes in the bud, and proposed prompt mediation and rigid conditions: the maintenance of Constantinople in the Sultan's hands with a territory bordered on the west by the Maritza, the sea, and the existing Bulgarian frontier; partition of the rest of the peninsula among the allied Powers in accordance with their Agreements; a little Albania extending along the Adriatic coast; access for Serbia to the sea; satisfaction for Roumania's desire for rectification of her frontiers in the way of an entente with Bulgaria; maintenance of Mt. Athos independent under the Patriarch.

[1] Telegram, Cambon, No. 398.

Rather a far-fetched scheme, when the Powers had not even decided upon intervention! Nor did Sazonoff only give his ideas to us, he addressed Berlin at the same time.[1]

When I got Cambon's message I told Isvolsky pretty plainly what I thought of Sazonoff's "rush tactics"; he should at least have waited for our reply before going to Berlin with so weighty and debatable a programme. The Ambassador agreed in regretting his Minister's move, he thought it savoured of incoherence.[2]

Troubles of this sort came every day. Russia gained nothing by her ill-balanced initiatives, and we could not follow her. Sazonoff besides was shilly-shallying over Adrianople: he told Louis, in strict secrecy, that Kokovtzoff and the Russian Ministers of War and Marine thought that this town was not the key to Constantinople, and that if things looked that way, they could let the Bulgars have it. It was "mysteriouser and mysteriouser"! And mediation? Gabriel Effendi wanted us in fact to impose an immediate armistice upon the victors. It would mean, in Bompard's words, that for Turkey's sake we should challenge the Balkan Allies. I replied that we could do nothing without a definite demand for friendly intervention. Rifaat Pasha brought fresh news, which he assured me was being circulated to the Great Powers. The Grand Vizier and Gabriel Effendi urged frantically that Europe should intervene before the Chataldja line were forced, *i.e.* that the Bulgar advance be stayed. My answer was that we could exert no *pressure*,

[1] The editors of the Black Book finding a mention of Cambon's telegram informing us of Sazonoff's proposals, in a message from Isvolsky, accuse us of deliberately suppressing this in our Yellow Book, and a pro-German American author has echoed the charge. But if all telegrams and despatches sent to or received by France during 1912 were to be published in our Yellow Book or the present work, a whole library would be insufficient. Many things "cut out" are wholly favourable to France; and this is a case in point, Cambon's "suppressed" telegram merely giving the account already cited. "My Russian colleague informs me of Sazonoff's proposals, which he is to communicate to the Secretary of State to-morrow." There follow the details as to immediate intervention, Constantinople region, etc. etc. If only Siebert, Stieve, and the Black Book were merely guilty of such "suppressions"!

[2] The phrase struck me and I recorded it Series D, carton 38, Dossier I.M. But Isvolsky in passing on my comments to Sazonoff suppressed his own stricture.

and must first ask if the Balkan States were ready to accept mediation by the Great Powers.

Cambon, speaking of the proposed conference, feared that the Triple Alliance would press for this to be held in Rome. Kiderlen had said that Jagow, the German Ambassador at Rome, was "best placed to represent Germany", but Jagow, in Cambon's phrase, was "a creature of Bülow", who lived magnificently in Rome, was "able, agreeable, and rich", and would be the true German leader, and "a real danger".

In Berlin and London, as at Paris, the Turkish request was turned down, but Sazonoff returned to the charge. He, even more than the Turks, feared the piercing of the Chataldja lines, and urged London and Paris that Berlin must join in warning Ferdinand off Constantinople; he whispered to me that the occupation of the Sultan's capital by the Balkan Allies would mean the appearance of Russia's Black Sea Fleet on the scene, and that international complications would ensue. He also reminded me that Russian public opinion was profoundly moved by the Balkan events and made the position of the Imperial Government very difficult.

I confess I did not like the tone of this note. How *could* we intervene to get an armistice, and how *could* we stop the Bulgars advancing on Constantinople, if they forced the Chataldja lines, save by military pressure? British opinion more and more favoured the Balkan States, and Sir Edward Grey must reserve his decision. Kiderlen, whilst maintaining, whether in courtesy or mockery, that in general he accepted Sazonoff's ideas, put forward something very different. Constantinople with "sufficient territory" was to remain Turkish, but it would be "easier" to give Serbia access to the Ægean than to the Adriatic. How this was to be reconciled with Græco-Bulgar ambitions he left unsaid. Nothing could have been better calculated to set the Balkan Allies at daggers; Kiderlen was ready to let the Bulgars keep Adrianople if they could take it.

Now came a puff of peace. Count Szecsen told me, on

the 6th of November, that although Austria thought it undignified to agree to the "disinterestedness" formula, she had no territorial ambitions even in the Sanjak. He added officially, but confidentially (the Austrians loved this sort of juggling with words), that she had abandoned the *status quo*, but that her assent to the expansion of her neighbours such as Serbia and Montenegro depended upon guarantees that such States would not be hostile; promises were insufficient, she must have permanent economic facilities which could create durable interests in common. So far all was plain sailing, but the cloven hoof peeped out. "No outlet for Serbia to the Adriatic." A nice diplomatic battle this would rouse! "An Albania capable of existence and development." This was not the little Albania conceived by Sazonoff! "Respect for the legitimate desires of Roumania—certain local rectifications of her frontiers." All this would depend on what was meant by "rectifications". Further, the Balkan States to undertake maintenance of existing commercial treaties, Salonica to be a free port, and conventions to assure Austria unhindered communication with this port whether "free" or neutralised.[1] There was a wide gulf between this programme and Sazonoff's or even Sir Edward's. The latter had just said in the Commons that "no one would be inclined to dispute the right of the Balkan States to impose their own conditions for peace, nor did the Great Powers seem slower than other people to modify their views to suit circumstances". Fleuriau wrote that this was well received in Parliament and represented British opinion,[2] which was not easy to reconcile with the Viennese. Berchtold was now in the dumps, and we heard that in his *exposé* to the delegations he said that the situation was very grave. He alluded to the "diplomatic initiative of M. Poincaré to end the war", and went on to say that the programme of the Balkan States had been altered by their military successes; they no longer spoke of administrative reforms, but wished to throw aside Turkish

[1] Conditions enumerated in a note taken immediately, Series D, Carton 38, Dossier 1.

[2] Despatch from London, 6th November, No. 484.

sovereignty. Austria's aim was not to acquire territory but to keep peace.

Sazonoff insisted anew that England and France should accept his programme. Hoping to cool him down, I answered like Kiderlen, that I was prepared to agree in principle and would consult London, but I thought it wrong to exclude Adrianople from the Bulgarian zone, that the formulas proposed for Austria were too restrictive and ill-phrased, and that it would be best to leave the delicate question of Mount Athos for the present. He continued to press for quick intervention, but Kiderlen, like myself, thought it useless to invoke the moral weight of Europe until Turkey had genuinely sued for an armistice and peace.

Each day prolonged our suspense.[1]

Cambon's fears, expressed in a letter, were but too well founded. Vesnitch came to the Ministry grave and grim. The Government at Belgrade considered an outlet to the Adriatic as vital, and would make any sacrifice to obtain it. In London, Serbia was even more emphatic. Should a Power friendly to Austria, such as Italy, oppose a Serb port on the Adriatic, Serbia would seize Durazzo and sit in it, in which case Austria would send warships.[2] The President of the Bulgar Sobranje was about to leave for Vienna, and announce there that Bulgaria was backing Serbia.[3] Barrère telegraphed[4] Italy was ready with diplomatic support for Austria, less from love of the Triple Alliance than because she foresaw that a Serbian port under economic servitude to Austria would practically be in the hands of the Dual Monarchy, a prospect she by no means relished.

[1] My diary just now had sad entries. 7th November, Pierre Loti champions the Turks in the *Figaro*. I remember how enthusiastically he spoke to me of them eight years ago in Stamboul. The Balkan successes will do nothing to cool his ardour for his friends, but his is a voice crying in the wilderness.

Jules Cambon writes: "My Russian colleague told me yesterday that it looked like difficulties being cleared away, as Adrianople is the only point in dispute. True, but that point is black enough."

The Serbian Minister at Berlin says Serbia will forcibly resist if she is deprived of her gains; our Ambassador says this may be bluff, but it is dangerous bluff.

[2] Telegram, Paul Cambon, 7th November, No. 340.

[3] Telegram, Panafieu, Sofia, 7th November, No. 137.

[4] Telegram, Barrère, 7th November, No. 631.

Of course, Isvolsky wanted to play his own part in this inharmonious concert. He seems to have said to Schoen, that as regards the Adriatic, Russia could not swallow another humiliation in the Balkans. Schoen told Kiderlen of this utterance, which was rather clumsy, because it suggested as a "humiliation" something which Russia might not be able to prevent. Kiderlen of course took advantage of this to say something sharp about Isvolsky to Cambon, and then told the Serbian Chargé d'affaires that the German Government must stick to its ally. No Serb port on the Adriatic; railway communication from it over foreign territory, and a corridor to the Ægean along the Vardar Valley; so much and no more could Germany concede.

Jules Cambon also enlightened me about San Giuliano in Berlin. Italy had a secret convention with Austria, dating from 1901, which provided for the maintenance of an intact Albania under the Ottoman flag; should this disappear, the signatory Powers undertook to maintain an independent Albania against any other Powers. Should Serbia encroach on Albanian territory Italy would be forced to join forces with Austria in any steps she undertook which might have far-reaching consequences.[1] Every step we took we seemed to stumble over some secret treaty. Into what dark path was Europe heading? How much longer could things go on like this?

Clouds on the Adriatic, clouds on the Sea of Marmora. The Grand Vizier and Gabriel Effendi gave a sob of agony. The Turkish troops could not defend the Chataldja lines; "the arrival of the Bulgars would be fatal should Europe not intervene. Whether the Sultan and the Turkish Government remained buried under the ruins of the Caliphs' capital or whether they retired on the other side of the Bosphorus, the effect must be more than considerable in Asia, and must be fruitful of trouble, murder and pillage."

In flowery language the message ran that the Grand Vizier and Gabriel Effendi were "resolute to die at their post", but there were in Constantinople 650,000 Mussulmans against 350,000 Christians, and of the latter they could not

[1] Telegram, Cambon, 7th November, No. 405.

answer for the life of a single one. Europe must hasten to curb the Bulgars and to send ships. Turkey would open the Straits. Even Sazonoff bowed to the inevitable, and instructed Benckendorff and Isvolsky that the Russian Government would not oppose the entry of the Balkan Allies into Constantinople provided that their stay was temporary. The Russian Black Sea Fleet would be then sent to Constantinople to watch the Bulgars. But what about Germany and Austria?

On the 8th November came words of good sense from Sir Edward Grey. A pity, he thought, to see Austria and Serbia wrangling whilst the war continued: conditions of peace should be arranged after the cessation of hostilities; until then it was useless to worry about what was *said* by the belligerents. Grey thought Kiderlen should check Austria and that any military occupation of territory could only be temporary.[1] This was all right, but would Austria see it? I telegraphed to London and St. Petersburg recapitulating the points made by Austria and Germany. The German Government would support Russia as to Constantinople if Russia toed the line with Austria in the Adriatic question. (Kiderlen was even prepared to exclude Bulgaria from Adrianople to square the sacrifices demanded from Serbia; this seemed to me superfluous.) There seemed no more fear of Austrian schemes of aggrandisement; the great thing was to get together with her over the Adriatic, a point I stressed to London and St. Petersburg.[2]

I had scarcely sent off this when Rifaat Pasha, pale and perturbed, came on the scene conjuring up visions of universal massacres, as indicated in Bompard's message. I explained to him that the Porte did not sue for peace, but merely for an armistice; the Powers were hindered by Turkey's vacillation, but if the Christians were threatened France would do her duty.[3]

On the 9th November I received Schoen, who agreed that Austria should do nothing irrevocable: a European war

[1] Telegram, London, No. 342; Yellow Book, No. 224.

[2] Nos. 825 for St. Petersburg, 829 for London.

[3] Nos. 826 for St. Petersburg, 831 for London, 636 for Berlin, 514 for Vienna, 742 for Rome, 664 for Constantinople.

would be a disproportionate result to a dispute over the exportation of "Serbian swine"! He spoke French well, and I fancied I saw a play on words between *porcs* and *port*. If so, a sidelight upon the German view of "little nations" and the psychology of Hasse, Retzel, and Treitschke!

After Schoen came Tittoni, and while telling him what I had said to the German Ambassador I asked that his Government should back me up in Berlin, to which he made no difficulty. Then Isvolsky turned up, whom I pressed for a clear lead from Russia as to what she proposed in the Adriatic question, and to whom I made it clear that we did not want any "surprises".

On the 10th November the *Jules Ferry* was sent by Bompard to Dedeagatch and Kavalla to take off foreigners. Adrianople was besieged but could get Constantinople by wireless. Louis told me that Russia was retaining a class, normally by now dismissed, until the 31st December with the colours, as a measure of precaution. Sazonoff by now seemed to have given up intervention; he did not like the idea of an Ægean port for Serbia, which would embroil her with the Greeks and Bulgars, but he was sorry that the question of an Adriatic port had arisen. Russia had never guaranteed such a thing for Serbia, and it was part of a many-sided question: she had as yet come to no decision regarding the Serb port, and was urging moderation at Belgrade. Whatever her promised diplomatic support Russia had not committed herself to any armed help. Sazonoff had insisted that a Serbian army should not advance on Durazzo, but he feared, so Louis said, that his words would fall on deaf ears, and that if the Serbs reached the Adriatic and Austria attacked them, he would be unable to hold Russia back.[1]

To refer to my diary: 11th November, Asquith has said something at the Guildhall which had a good echo in Berlin. "The Great Powers are working for peace with remarkable frankness and good-feeling." But Germany kept a stiff lip over the Serb port issue, and, according to Cambon, was anxious about the approaching renewal of the Triple Alliance,

[1] Telegram, Louis, 10th November, No. 517.

and felt called upon to satisfy the demands of her allies. Sir Edward Goschen thinks with me that the ties between Germany, Austria, and Italy have never been better shown than by this trip of the Italian Minister. Italy is, I think, confident that her allies will let her keep Rhodes and the Ægean islands. I tell Count Szeczen that Russia seems conciliatory and I hope Austria will make no irreparable mistake. France and England, I say, agree that a situation arising out of the events of a war does not constitute a régime which cannot be revised when peace is concluded: and although I shall not say anything as to actual events or as to the results of the war, it is obvious the Powers will one day make themselves heard as to any territorial changes.

November 12.—Sazonoff asks London and Paris to enjoin prudence on Belgrade. We have already done this, I tell him, and will do it again together with Russia, but as she has more influence over Serbia than we have she must set the example. The Russian Government always seems to shelter behind England and France without caring two pins whether it sets the Balkan peoples against us.

Sazonoff again says that his Government insists on Serbia knowing that she cannot drag Russia into war just for an Adriatic port. With regard to the partition of Turkey in Europe, Russia points to the serious consequences produced which might alienate French and English sympathies from Serbia. Quite correct sentiments, but why the tactless tag? Russia uses us and England as a shield. Happily she is all right at bottom, and one must forgive her peccadilloes because she is really trying to prevent war.

The Russian Government asks England to look into—with us—some settlement of the Serbian question such as a railway from the Danube to the Adriatic, with a free port at St. Jean de Madna. Paul Cambon likes the idea, and as Russia again asks whether she can, if the case arises, count on our help, he says in his telegram to me: "We cannot say otherwise than that we would help; boggling on this point might mean a break with Russia". What a pity Fabre-Luce did not see this telegram when he was an Extra Secretary at

the Embassy: it would have been the reply to one of his most curious allegations.

November 13.—Austria tells the King of Montenegro that without interfering in the war she considers Alesio and Madna should remain outside the contested zone and form part of an autonomous Albania. She therefore does not care a fig what England and France say, and acts as if she could carve up the Balkans by herself. But will the Allies begin to squabble over their booty? The Bulgars are rattled over King George's solemn entry into Salonica, and are all the more set on Constantinople. At Belgrade Hartwig ploughs his own political furrow, and without actually disowning Sazonoff's wise advice he adds a postscript which weakens it. I let Sazonoff know that as regards the attitude we might take up if Austria's hand can't be kept off Serbia, this cannot be determined until we know what Russia would think of doing. I ask Louis to find out from Sazonoff what measures his people would take if Vienna were to coerce. I am not going blindfold into anything and I must be free.

This evening the Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture held its annual banquet, when two thousand guests were present, and the President gave a glowing address punctuated by vociferous cheers. "Our Society", he wound up by saying, "is at one with all Frenchmen in its high esteem and approval of yourself". My reply, which I had submitted textually to my colleagues, dealt of course largely with foreign affairs, and dwelt on the determined efforts of ourselves and the other Powers to keep peace.

CHAPTER XXIII

Question of a Serb port—Russia and the *casus foederis*—Wilhelm's *Tableaux d'histoire*—Austria's military preparations.

THE Serbian port! Serbian swine! With what curled lip Austria, and even Germany, spoke of these Serbian pretensions. It was like a sort of political doctrine; a fine contempt for little nations, whom big nations have the right either to exterminate or bring into subjection. In view of the relentless opposition of the two-headed monarchy, and of Berlin's easy acquiescence in it, Russia's plain duty was to try and stave off an appeal to the sword which might have lasting ill-effects, and her attitude was dictated by sheer humanity. I spoke strongly to Vesnitch, and I told our Minister at Belgrade to join with his English and Russian colleagues in urging Serbia to keep cool. I was careful also to enjoin on him not to let Russia screen herself behind us at Belgrade, and throw on our shoulders the full responsibility for combined action. The Triple Entente was thus "labouring for peace"; was the Triple Alliance doing likewise, or—as Professor Foerster has said—was she losing her last chance of creating a peaceful community of Danubian peoples and of substituting an up-to-date and democratic system for the old and completely artificial régime of the Austro-Hungarian supremacy? She had anyhow wounded the Serbians in their *amour propre*, and sown seeds of hatred, not only on the frontiers of the Hapsburg empire but in the Slav provinces themselves.[1]

[1] Just when this question of the Adriatic was acute, Clemenceau asked me to give evidence before his Commission as to electoral reform. I told him that I would come whenever he pleased, but electoral reform, however important, could do little to deflect my attention from the Balkans.

Sazonoff had told Louis that it was very difficult to get the Serbians to listen to reason, and that willy-nilly they would probably occupy a port on the Adriatic. "Sazonoff", so Louis telegraphed to me, "hints that it may not even be possible, in the event of an Austrian intervention, to stand up against Russian public opinion". Once more I had asked Isvolsky—and had begged Louis to ask Sazonoff—to let me know in advance what Russia would think it right to do in the event of Austrian threat or coercion. I had let the Ambassador know that I could not tell him, even in confidence, what line of conduct France would adopt if Austria were actually to move until the Russian Government could inform me as to its own conditional intentions. Neither Louis nor I got any answer. After having told me of Sazonoff's "hint", Louis added: "I have asked the Minister if he has addressed London as to the Serbian port; he replied that he had told my English colleague of the advice given at Belgrade, but that he was going to write also to Count Benckendorff to the effect that the question which had been put to Paris regarding 'the eventual attitude of France and England' would be equally put to London".

Isvolsky insisted, however, on getting an answer out of us, and the same thing went on between Sir Edward Grey and Count Benckendorff. The letters of the two Ambassadors have been published by Siebert and exploited by German propaganda with a ferocity which fully displays the inanity—I might say the insanity—of the accusations levelled against the Triple Entente. Isvolsky's letter has also been inserted in the Black Book, and having correctly stated that I could not let him know just what France would do, Isvolsky makes me say:

"It is for Russia to take the initiative where she is chiefly concerned; it is for France to help her as much as she can. If the French Govermnent were to set the ball rolling it would run the risk of being outside the real wishes of its ally. It is just because there should be no doubt as to the help we should render, that I thought it right to stress a passage in Sazonoff's instructions to the Russian Minister at Belgrade in which France and

England say that they would do nothing to embitter the conflict with the Triple Alliance. In fact it comes to this, that if Russia makes war France would do the same, as we know that behind Austria would be Germany."

Very rash words from the head of the French Government, people might fairly say! Unfortunately for Siebert, for the Black Book and even for Isvolsky, my explanation to the Russian Ambassador was not verbal but written on Foreign Office paper, and it is odd that this letter should not be among the papers the Soviets have circulated. The letter, which had been discussed in Council, ran :

" In two notes of the 12th of this month you have been good enough to inform me as to the difference of opinion between the Cabinets of Vienna and Belgrade regarding an eventual extension of Serbian territory towards the Adriatic Sea. The Government of the Republic takes serious note of a matter which might issue in a danger to peace. This is why the instructions of the Russian Foreign Minister to Belgrade seem to us so wisely worded. I at once asked our representative in Serbia to give the same advice to the Government of the King. But M. Sazonoff foresees that the conciliatory action of the Triple Entente may not suffice to deflect Austria from coercive action, and he wishes to know what France will do in such case. As I have twice told you verbally, the Government of the Republic cannot define its line of conduct before the Imperial Government has disclosed its own views. Russia is the party most interested in the question, and on her lies the responsibility of what initiative should be taken or what plans laid down. I must wait, therefore, for what the Imperial Government may think right to inform the Government of an allied Power. I think it not superfluous to rectify an observation made by M. Sazonoff in one of these notes, that ' France and England pronounce that absolutely they are not disposed to allow the conflict with the Triple Alliance to be embittered '. This question is the more important as the Russian Minister at Belgrade has been told to quote it in his representations to the Serbian Government. As regards England, I have no knowledge that she has made such a pronouncement, but the French Government must wait to consider the proposals which the Imperial Government may judge necessary to make, and can only agree with them *or discuss them* on friendly lines when they are known. Meanwhile we have said nothing which could suggest in any way any falling off in our help."

This letter, approved in Council, was meant to bring things to a point and to prevent any quibbling. According to the Russian note to Serbia, they were making ready to twit us as unjustly as in 1909 with "lack of support". I agreed with Paul Cambon that this sort of thing might jeopardise our alliance, but I was resolved on our right to be consulted, and as Russia was silent as to her projects, even if she had any, I was adamant that she should speak first.

Commentators like William II., who represent the French Government as being dragged at Russia's heels, have strangely erred. How Isvolsky could find in the letter what was not there is a secret he carried to the grave. But he seems to have had a stab of self-reproach. He came to see me on 18th November, and after humming and hawing, he read out the passage in which he had said that France would go to war if Russia did so. I protested that I had said nothing of the kind, that he had nothing to add to my letter, and that if he did not correct any false impression at St. Petersburg, I should have to myself disavow the words he had put into my mouth. He promised to put things straight, which he did by new inaccuracies, telegraphing to St. Petersburg, 5th/18th November 1912,[1] that "to avoid all misunderstandings" he had read out to me his telegram No. 369, of which I had "entirely approved the text". I had merely asked that the conditions should be "clearly defined" under which France would make war. It was "well understood" that France would take the field in the event of the *casus foederis*; *i.e.* in the case of Germany arming with Austria against Russia. Of course I had not approved the text of a telegram which contradicted my own letter. Knowing Germany to be determined to back up Austria, I naturally repeated to Isvolsky what I had already told Sazonoff at St. Petersburg, that in the event of the *casus foederis*, we should loyally do our duty. I never thereby said that it sufficed for Germany to support Austria, for France to support Russia; on the contrary, I based myself on the Treaty of Alliance which

[1] Black Book, vol. i. p. 346-47.

ran: "If Russia is *attacked* by Germany or by Austria supported by Germany, France will use all her available forces to attack Germany". I had neither the right nor the inclination to say anything else.

Although Isvolsky had promised to correct his misunderstanding, although, as I telegraphed to Louis, he had assured me that he would send my letter to St. Petersburg, I deemed it wise to warn our Ambassador that the formula read to me by Isvolsky was much too vague, and did not give my views. I had merely said that France would respect her Treaty of Alliance. He should make this clear at St. Petersburg.[1]

But there is a third telegram from Isvolsky. The man had his pen in the ink-pot day and night, and the marvel is that the Germans could not get three lines on which to hang a row of French Ministers out of what he wrote! On the 20th November Isvolsky tells Sazonoff of a meeting of the German, Austrian and Italian Ambassadors about the Serb and Albanian questions. "Poincaré said to Tittoni that if a general war ensued Russia could count on France in arms;"[2] he penned this phrase just after he had rectified his mix-up. As it happened, I had telegraphed to Barrère what I had said to Tittoni. Tittoni reminded me that, with war between Austria and Russia over Albania, the Visconti Venosta Agreement would force Italy to side with Austria. I mildly asked whether, if Germany intervened in her turn, and we were obliged to join up with Russia, would Italy forget the Franco-Italian pact of 1902? Tittoni replied that this was subsequent to the Visconti Venosta arrangements and could not destroy them, to which I could say that the 1902 pact was all-embracing and admitted no exception. Tittoni then only muttered that the situation was difficult, and that we must avoid the question being raised. The crux was that I would not let Tittoni think Italy was free to back Austria while we must lend no hand to Russia. As Tittoni had raised the point I had to put it to him that France might also have to support her ally. Did Italy propose war with us?

[1] Yellow Book, No. 263.
[2] Black Book, vol. i. p. 347.

Sir Edward Grey's reply, quoted in the *Tableaux d'histoire*, was on the same lines. Wilhelm flourishes a letter from the Russian Ambassador at London and alters the sense of it. Benckendorff was told to ask what England would do if Austria were to attack Serbia? Benckendorff would not press the question, as Sir Edward Grey had said enough to let him know that under special conditions England would take up arms. The Ambassador believed that these conditions would be (*a*) that France should take part in a general war, (*b*) that the *onus* of attack should lie on the adversary. Wilhelm catches hold of these conditions, ascribes them to Grey, and says, "England therefore had to bring into high relief the aggressiveness of Austrian or German policy". So according to the Imperial historian, England had promised help as soon as France should take the field, and he construes this into a flagrant proof of a secret fighting arrangement between England and France. Thus on the strength of an imperfectly understood letter Benckendorff, himself of Baltic origin and no special friend of France, is said to be able to twist Sir Edward—and Cambon—round his finger. Happily there came to London, in Prince Lichnowsky, a German Ambassador who was loyalty itself, who compensated for a couple of Russians, and than whom no one gave better information as to Sir Edward Grey's fine efforts to preserve peace.

The Powers agreed to question the Balkan States as to mediation, but the Grand Vizier having himself sued Ferdinand for peace, the young Balkans solemnly said our *démarche* had no further useful purpose and they would deal direct with the Sublime Porte.[1] Kiderlen very politely asked me to go on corresponding as to Albania, Adrianople, Constantinople, Mt. Athos, the Roumanian frontier and the isles, and Tittoni was eloquent about a fine *combinazione*, devised by his Government: the Sanjak of Novi Bazar to be shared between Montenegro and Serbia; Antivari to be a Montenegrin port, open to Serbia, and linked up with Serb territory by railway; a second port, neutralised, on Albanian territory, communication by a railway, also neutralised.

[1] Yellow Book, No. 266.

Italy would smile on this scheme, and hoped the Powers would press it on Serbia.[1] A regular rain of proposals! Each Government had its own system, its own invention, its own special panacea for Europe's disorders. But the healing waters did not abound. The Russian Government was badly served by many of its agents; Hartwig at Belgrade did not stick to Sazonoff's instructions. Sazonoff himself, so Louis said, was a little dazed; he would not commit himself as to Albanian autonomy and a Serbian port, and if he did not speak in plain words, how could we speak at all to Vienna? A European conference, which Cambon and Kiderlen alike favoured, seemed the only chance. Panafieu sent me a résumé of Balkan conditions: the same story, armistice up to conclusion of peace; the surrender of Adrianople and of its garrison; the lines of Chataldja and fortifications to the Bulgarians; Janina and its garrison to Greece; Scutari and its garrison to the Montenegrins; the towns of Dibra and Durazzo to Serbia, the Ottoman troops to evacute all territory in the Balkans west of the Chataldja lines, and to raise at once the blockade of the Black Sea ports.

With the distribution of the spoils came the inevitable squabble. Much to the annoyance of the Serbs and Bulgars, the Greeks reached Salonica before them, and the Greeks were no less irritated that the Serbs had cut in first at Monastir, and were already clamouring for the entire region of Serres and Drama. What a whirligig in which to discuss peace!

At the funeral of the Spanish Ambassador, on 20th November, I broached to Paléologue the idea of a conference and found him wholly favourable. I asked Szecsen if his Government would let the neutral port for Serbia be on Serb, instead of on Albanian, territory as proposed by Tittoni. Serbia, for example, could be linked up with St. Jean de Madna by a narrow strip passing between Montenegro and Albania. "What do you mean by the neutrality of this Serb soil?" "Like Faucigny." Szecsen assented, but thought that Austria would want guarantees as to Salonica; Schoen "personally" favoured Serbia

[1] Telegram, Paris to Postes, 18th November.

having a way out to the Adriatic over "neutralised" Serbian territory. If only the Governments would be as conciliatory as their Ambassadors, the Great Powers might be able to agree among themselves and set a good example to their little brothers.

Montenegro now warned Serbia that she meant to stick to St. Jean de Madna, the "key of Scutari", and it looked as if Serbia, in any case, would make for Durazzo; if she treated it only as a commercial port, Russia, according to Sazonoff, would say Amen to her.[1] Here was a new apple of discord between Vienna and St. Petersburg.

The problem of electoral reform just now popped up; the Senatorial Commission who examined Steeg and myself disfavoured proportional representation, but the senators, like the deputies, were bent on foreign politics and did nothing to add to our troubles. On the 21st November, fearing that Russia, if she backed Serbia about Durazzo, might be embittered with Austria, I telegraphed Louis[2] that I appreciated the concession made by Russia as to the Albanian autonomy, but that in Austrian eyes this would be valueless if Albania were amputated as far as Durazzo. The Austrian, German and Italian Ambassadors left no doubt in my mind as to this, and Tittoni had declared that, despite the Racconigi Agreements, Italy would be forced in this matter to side with Austria. If Montenegro insisted on keeping St. Jean de Madna, Serbia's outlet to the Adriatic could only be assured at the price of a conflict with the Triple Alliance. I reminded Sazonoff that in the declarations made by him to the Serb Government, and which he had urged us to support, we had set our faces against this contingency, and once more I cried aloud for a conference.[3]

If St. Petersburg and Paris were at cross purposes, Paris and London were in closer and closer touch, and the

[1] Telegram, Louis, No. 158.

[2] No. 884.

[3] "The French Government is much perturbed, and Poincaré asks if you are keeping to the point in the instructions given to our envoy at Belgrade, or if these have been modified. Poincaré is convinced that Austria, like Italy, will refuse to allow the Serbs to reach Durazzo; . . . it must be made clear to Serbia that if she persists in marching on Durazzo, she does so at her own risk. . . ." (Isvolsky to Sazonoff.)

Grey and Cambon letters of 22nd and 23rd November served to deepen and strengthen the Entente Cordiale.

A conference there must be, but where? Sazonoff plumped for Paris, and it was certainly usual to choose a place from which the request for the meeting had come. The authorities in Berlin and London also thought Paris highly convenient, but the difficulty was the German and Austrian dislike of Isvolsky, and Paul Cambon thought anyhow it was not for us to put forward our own capital.

Meanwhile the Turkish Government kicked at the Balkan conditions for an armistice, and had the German and Austrian Ambassadors behind them, Vienna and Berlin being quite content that the Allies should hammer themselves to pieces against the Chataldja lines. Whilst the Central Empires thus blew on the embers of a dying fire Dumaine wrote that Austrian reserve officers were being quietly called up to their regiments; that the Ist, Xth and XIth (Galicia) army corps were believed to be mobilising, as also the Vth and VIth (Hungary). The Italian Minister of Marine told M. Barrère that Austria was mobilising by land and sea,[1] and that the Archduke Franz Ferdinand had had a mysterious interview at Springe with the German Emperor.[2] Happily the Turks—under advice of Russia—continued to parley, although they declined the Balkans' conditions; while the battle raged the delegates haggled, and Austria wanted an armistice rather than peace. On the 25th Szecsen, more suspicious than ever, came to tell me that Vienna understood the Balkan States were preparing to make peace with Turkey, and that the "Imperial and Royal Government"—agreeably with the views of other Cabinets—could recognise no treaty signed by the belligerents until after consultation with Europe. I replied that the French Government generally accepted the idea of a conference, and that this idea had been merely delayed and not rejected. Paul Cambon returned to the charge;

[1] Telegram, Rome, 24th November, No. 665, Yellow Book, No. 280.

[2] Jules Cambon's information was that General Schemua had come from Vienna to see the German General Staff and that reserve officers of technical services had been warned for duty. (Telegram, Berlin, No. 446, Yellow Book.)

he had a healthy fear of being too late. Kiderlen would limit the conference to the Great Powers, an exclusion we by no means shared, as all interested Powers should surely have their say. As to giving a neutralised St. Jean de Madna to Serbia, Berchtold thought this scarcely reconcilable with an autonomous Albania; he would admit Serbia to the Adriatic by an Albanian port with guaranteed freedom of commerce, even with the neutralisation of the port and facilities to import munitions (in time of peace), but he could go no farther. As to the economic relations of Austria and Serbia, Austria sought nothing more than the other Powers, but she must have commercial access to the Ægean, and could not allow the disappearance of Turkey. Bompard now wired that the report of Austrian mobilisation had reached Constantinople and that, aggravated by the language and bearing of the German and Austrian Ambassadors, it was bucking up the Turks, who hoped that a row between Austria and Serbia would be the undoing of Russia and the Balkan States. This did not help on the negotiations; and, as Jules Cambon wrote, if peace were not signed at Chataldja everything would depend upon the first military success; if the Bulgars scored this the Turks would be left without a friend in Europe.

Sir Edward Grey was prepared to propose Paris as the venue, in which case Paul Cambon would probably have been President; Kiderlen's objection was due to the Russian and Italian Ambassadors accredited here.

On the 1st December Bompard tells us that the pourparlers at Bagtchekkeni are well forward, and that the armistice is on the eve of being signed. It was indeed high time. Austria was abating nothing of her militarism, Russia had not moved a soldier, and now Germany must suddenly, and without rhyme or reason, bang her fist on the table.

On the 2nd December in the Reichstag, Hollweg having paid a perfunctory tribute to the pacific intentions of the several Governments, went on to say: "If our allies, when establishing their rights, were to be attacked from a third side, and their existence thus threatened, we must, in

pursuance of our duty, place ourselves resolutely at their side. We should then have to fight to protect our own place in Europe and for our future safety. I am convinced the whole nation would be behind us." Why was this pistol presented? Grey, the calmest of statesmen, said the German pronouncement made him uneasy, and uneasiness certainly prevailed here while the converse was to be noted in Austria.

Dumaine wrote:

"The eventuality of war, for which every one here is feverishly preparing—without thinking who is to declare war or against whom—appears to many to be wished for in order to have done with the unrest in the Hapsburg Monarchy. If all goes well with her, Austria sees herself swallowing Serbia, abolishing Russian influence, and spreading herself over the Balkans. If she is beaten, it would only be the speeding up of inevitable dissolution, and every nationality would do its best for itself in the general scramble which would ensue."

This weighty reckoning up, made on the 3rd December 1912, helps us to understand the attitude of the Austrian-Hungarian Government, when in 1913 the Vienna Cabinet proposed to Italy joint action against Serbia, and when in 1914, after Sarajevo, it received its drums and trumpets from Hollweg for the ultimatum to Belgrade.

CHAPTER XXIV

Letter from Paul Cambon—Russia and Italy—The Narrows—Armistice of Chataldja—Commission of Foreign Affairs—Peace preliminaries.

On the 4th December came a striking letter from Paul Cambon. The Balkan war, he said, had upset all the calculations of Austrian statesmen, who were either ignorant, or sceptical, as to the Balkan coalition. Austria could have prevented the war, but she pinned her hope to a Turkish victory with a subsequent European intervention when, as customary with her, she would have sucked no little advantage. The Balkans had won the war, and one could now foresee the dividing up among them of the Ottoman provinces which Austria coveted. Austria must now be content with what she has. The Emperor's representatives at foreign Courts affirm that Austria had never had an eye to Salonica, and that she will accept the new situation without reserve, but men are scarcely likely to abandon in two months the ambitions pursued for generations. Cambon touched upon the influence exercised by consuls and diplomatic agents, who were maintained by Austria in the Near East, all trained men but narrow-minded and not particularly intelligent, who had little liking for the Balkans and a profound contempt for Serbia. The Cabinet at Vienna, he thought, had not abandoned their ambitions; they were withdrawing just to gain ground for a new spring. He dwelt upon the overtures they had made to Bulgaria, which caused uneasiness to Russia. The real point at issue was not a Serbian port on the Adriatic, a ribbon of territory, or a railway neutralised in Albania; it was whether Austria should be allowed to push forward to the Ægean.

" The question of the port ", so ran the final phrases of the letter, " and the Serbian railway is comparatively easy ; the question of Austrian policy in the Near East has only two answers ; either that policy must be laid aside or war, now or in the near future, is inevitable. It behoves us the more to face this eventuality, because Germany will support Austria in her Balkan policy not only because she is her ally, but because the eastward expansion of the Austro-Hungarian Empire is an axiom of German policy. The Berlin Cabinet hopes that Austria may one day cross the Danube and that the two Germanic Powers may stretch from the North Sea and the Baltic to the Ægean. No wonder, with this great scheme in mind, that M. de Bethmann-Hollweg has officially promised the help of Germany in arms. Serbia is to-day the occasion of the conflict provoked by Austro-Hungarian ambitions in the Balkans, but she is only an occasion, and France, England and Russia must of necessity oppose these far-reaching ambitions. The question which presents itself is one of general policy, and if the Vienna Cabinet compels us into official opposition to her plans, the French Republic will find itself forced to renew the old struggle between the French Monarchy and the House of Austria."

The Ambassador's letter was a prophetic commentary as to the intrigues of Austria at the coming conference, her plans for attack in 1913, the second Balkan war and the events of 1914 ! How can any one be so blind as not to see that with the information to hand we must do all we could to knit closer our friendships and take heed for the future.

Meanwhile Russia remained pacific, and Sazonoff listened coolly enough to Bethmann-Hollweg's peevish speeches, but worried himself as to what was passing between Tittoni and me. How could Italy, with all her genius for combination, reconcile the Agreements of Visconti Venosta with Austria, those of 1902 which she had made with us, and the arrangement made at Racconigi with Russia ? I tried in vain to get details as to the first and last of these Treaties from Tittoni. Isvolsky having asked me to communicate our 1902 Treaty to his Government, I made no bones about letting them know that Italy merely undertook not to engage in an offensive war against us, and had signed nothing to cut across the text of the Triple Alliance.

In return I asked for details of the mysterious Russo-Italian pact. Sazonoff, after a good deal of talk about "Parisian indiscretions", consented to impart them to me under seal of secrecy; and Isvolsky begged me not even tell my colleagues.[1] Some super-subtle spirits affect to see in this a dangerous intimacy with the Russian Government. But Sazonoff had actually made similar confidential communications to former Presidents of the Council, who, like myself, could let slip no opportunity of getting information. If Russia's regard for Italian susceptibilities induced this ultra-caution, there was nothing in the Racconigi Treaty which hurt us or reflected on the Triplice, and now that everything has been published, one cannot imagine why Russia should have made such a mystery of the matter. Russia and Italy agreed (*a*) to maintain the *status quo* in the Balkans, and (*b*) in all cases to accept and develop the principle of nationality in the Balkan States, to the exclusion of foreign domination; (*c*) they agreed to common action against infringement of the principle of clause (*d*), such action to be diplomatic, action other than diplomatic to be reserved for a later entente; (*e*) neither Russia nor Italy was to enter into engagements with a third Power in Near Eastern questions without participation of the other; (*f*) Italy and Russia pledged themselves to mutual "benevolence", the one in the case of Russian interests in the Narrows, the other in the case of Italian interests in Tripoli and Cyrenaica.

This Agreement was of course of as contradictory a nature as the Balkan Alliance, clause (*a*) beginning with the *status quo* which clause (*b*) supposes to be destroyed. But at Racconigi, Italy, like Russia, had foreseen and desired the Sofia Agreements. Both alike meant to bar the road for Austria-Hungary, save that Italy "hedged" with the Visconti Venosta pacts. The general promises in clause (*f*) squared with those made to Italy by France in 1900, and by us to Russia in 1909, and reaffirmed by the Cabinet which preceded mine. In December 1912 the question of the Narrows was as I had found it, and I was not without

[1] Black Book, 15/28 November, Letter, Sazonoff to Isvolsky, p. 356-57.

fear that Russia was meditating some "surprise". I told Louis to ask Sazonoff, who replied in a letter published by Siebert, but only summarised in the Black Book.[1] It is of importance as showing that up to that date, despite what has been alleged, there had been no change in French policy, and that Sazonoff was actually uneasy as to our point of view. The note from Isvolsky of 3rd December 1912 gives even stronger proof of this; it ran to this effect:—The French Ambassador has asked M. Sazonoff what his Government's own outlook would be as to the Narrows should this question immediately occur. While foreseeing that the Balkan war may make some change in the position of the Narrows the Imperial Government, thinking on the one hand that no definite change can take place before the end of hostilities, and being unwilling also to injure the interests of the Balkan States by appearing to ask for compensation, has been content merely to watch events so as to formulate its wishes at the opportune moment. It seems scarcely likely that the Allies will occupy Constantinople, which Turkey will therefore keep with a sufficient zone of defence, and for some little time the situation as regards the Narrows is not likely to be materially changed. Therefore it seems scarcely necessary for Russia to raise this question as a whole, though she might suggest some modifications with respect to the Narrows minor in character but of some importance for herself. In such case the question would be much in the terms formulated in 1908: "The right of the Powers bordering on the Black Sea to take their warships in and out the Narrows in time of peace, and on conditions of such sort as would safeguard Constantinople". The Russians thought circumstances not unfavourable to some such solution, but did not like to make any move in the matter lest they should appear to be asking for some compensation. If, however, the question should crop up of itself, the Russian Government looked to France for support, and Sazonoff wanted my opinion on the whole matter.

Now France had previously assured Russia of her

[1] Vol. i. p. 358.

friendly consideration, and the Russian Government was only making a hypothetical request, so when Isvolsky brought me this very cautious note I simply asked if I might hold over a definite reply until I had spoken to London, because from London in 1908 had come the chief objection. I hoped as a matter of fact that this question would not be raised, and, while taking care to reaffirm the dicta of our former Governments, I merely said that if the case as suggested should arise we should do our best to help Russia within the bounds of possibility.

On the 4th December news came from Panafieu that an armistice had been signed at Chataldja the preceding evening on terms proposed by Daneff: (*a*) The armies to remain in their respective positions; (*b*) besieged fortresses not to be reprovisioned; (*c*) Bulgarian troops to be revictualled via the Black Sea and the Adrianople railway—this to commence within ten days after signature of armistice; (*d*) Peace negotiations to begin in London, December 13th.

The Great Powers still moved towards a conference without knowing exactly what they were aiming at, and Isvolsky himself told me how strongly opposed Austria was to his taking personal part in it. "I share with Cardinal Rampolla", he said to Paléologue, "the honour of Austrian 'exclusion'. I am in excellent company." Isvolsky had shown himself moderate enough in Paris, and his exclusion from the conference was unreasonable, but his old reputation lingered in the chancellories of the Triple Alliance.

In those critical days the Commission of the Chamber for Foreign Affairs thought it inopportune to open a debate on the Eastern crisis, and did not even summon me. They contented themselves by a discreet inquiry as to whether, at some early date, I could enlighten them as to the situation. I met them Tuesday 5th December, and was at pains to be as moderate in my statement as Bethmann-Hollweg had been arrogant and irritating in his. The bulk of what I said appears in the Yellow Book.[1] I outlined events subsequent to the Balkan Alliance, and gave a description of our negotiations with our allies and other Powers, a résumé of our efforts

[1] Annexe II.

first to prevent, then to localise, hostilities. "Up to the present the Powers have been happily inspired to take no isolated measures during hostilities. This, which is the best guarantee of peace, has been achieved by a continuous interchange of views among all the chancellories." France, I added, was striving for peace and civilisation as well as for her own national honour and for the interests of her allies. My declaration was received with unanimous applause; the Commission thanked me warmly, and Jaurès wrote in *L'Humanité*, with a headline "enlightened": "M. Poincaré's declaration did not contain a single disquieting word nor a word of controversy"; he declared that my utterance, unlike Bethmann-Hollweg's, dragged in no hypothesis of war. Cambon [1] telegraphed me from Berlin that my speech had caused surprise, as every one had expected that I should reply to Bethmann-Hollweg in the same tone. The Germans were forced to admit that a firm purpose could be expressed in moderate words, and the Russian Ambassador had told him that my speech was a "lesson". Paul Cambon wrote to me of the good effect upon the Foreign Office, and that the *Times* had published a most appreciative article. France's moral interests in the East, he said, were too often forgotten, and I had thrown a searching light upon them.

From what Count Szecsen came to tell me Austria could not accept an international conference; she could go no further than a preparatory meeting of the Ambassadors. The Austrian Ambassador at London had been instructed to deny Serbia territorial access to the Adriatic, and Austria remembered her understanding with Italy as to Albania. Count Berchtold wanted the conference to meet in London, but did not wish that Paris should be barred or any slight offered to the French Government. He thought that the Balkan States should not be admitted to the deliberations of the Ambassadors, but he hoped that Roumania would be heard. Germany and Italy endorsed Austria's proposals [2] Grey accepted the idea of a preparatory meeting [3] and gracefully suggested Paris as rendezvous. But the French

[1] Telegram, Berlin, 8th December, No. 570.
[2] Telegram, Paris to London, 6th December, No. 970.
[3] Telegram, Cambon, 6th December, Nos. 385, 386.

Government preferred London as more neutral ground,[1] and because the presidency of Sir Edward would be the best augury of success.

None the less Austria pushed on her war preparations. She continued to reinforce the XVth. and XVIth. corps, which received fifteen new battalions. Reinforcements according to our "intelligence" were sent to the southern corps, XIIIth. VIIth. and perhaps XIIth. In the northern corps, Ist. Xth. and XIth., companies were brought up to a strength of one hundred and fifty men, the peace strength being ninety-two men. The same could be said of the IVth. and IInd. corps in the interior. The Danube flotilla was prepared to move, certain units were pushed near the frontiers, and bridges, stations, railways and telegraphs were put under guard.[2] Russia on the other hand did nothing except to retain the class of conscripts under arms already mentioned: we were almost uneasy as to her passive attitude.

The wretched squabble among the victorious allies went on. Greeks and Bulgars could not agree as to the spoils. Greece, so said Sofia, claimed not only Salonica, Monastir and all the Ægean islands, but Macedonia up to the Drama. The Bulgars were furious in denunciation of the greed and presumption of the Hellenes.[3] Pachitch did his best to smooth over these differences, the more so as he expected a scolding from Austria. On 9th December Vesnitch showed me a telegram from Belgrade; his Government believed Austria would forbid Serbia's access to the Adriatic, and it looked as if a note would be backed by armed force. "What should Serbia do?" he asked. "Let me talk it over with England and Russia," I answered, "but meanwhile Serbia should say she is ready to defer to the advice of Europe."[4] Information was no more reassuring from Dumaine than from Pachitch. Austria's underground policy was causing internal, no less than external, uneasiness, while people could not but contrast her large military preparations with the comparatively petty ends she had in

[1] Telegram, Paris to London, 6th December, No. 994.
[2] Letter from Millerand, 7th December.
[3] Telegram, Panafieu, 8th December, No. 187.
[4] Telegram, sent London and St. Petersburg, 9th December.

view, the more so as the Cabinet at Belgrade would be fairly docile, having been warned that Russia was unlikely to back up any immoderate claims. All sorts of rumours were flying about as to Austria's real intentions, but there was nothing definite.[1]

Hard upon this came a sudden change in the Austrian Ministry for War, while General Hoetzendorf, who a few months back had urged Aehrenthal to offensive action in the Balkans, was reinstated. True, his return was glossed over by pretending that he had been sacrificed to Italy, and that now, after the visit of the Marquis di San Giuliano, the cordiality between Rome, Vienna and Berlin rendered such a sacrifice needless ; but at the same time the Austrian Government refused officers leave to go abroad, and suspended for a year the right of emigration for men liable to military service. As Dumaine said, this did not look much like a peace programme.

[1] Despatch from Vienna, 9th December, No. 308.

CHAPTER XXV

St. Petersburg and Vienna—Letter from Jules Cambon—Reception of Balkan Delegates at Quai d'Orsay—Daneff's visit—Peace Conference and Assembly of Ambassadors—Austria continues her armaments.

MODERATION continued to be the order of the day at St. Petersburg.

" It would seem ", Louis telegraphed to me, " that the louder Germany talks and the more Austria fumes, the quieter things are here. Sazonoff, who is beaming, treats Hollweg's words as unimportant and the same note is sounded in the Press. One can't tell why this change has come over the scene nor if it will last : I believe it to be directly due to the Czar."

Sazonoff had received Serbia's demand note and had replied—without consulting us—that the Belgrade Cabinet should let Austria know they would defer to the advice of the Triple Entente Powers. Louis reminded us that " Sazonoff specified the Triple Entente because reference to Europe might mean throwing Serbia into the arms of Austria and Italy. A further inquiry will show your formula as better than what the Russian Government proposed."

As, however, Sazonoff thought he could advise Serbia to defer to the decision of the Triple Entente I telegraphed to Descos to back this in Belgrade, but stipulated that Serbia should rely upon the arbitration of Europe, not only on that of the Triple Entente. " Whatever our feelings for Serbia," I said, " we cannot sustain her in what might expose her to an Austrian ultimatum : she knows besides that she can look to us to uphold her rights to political and

economic freedom." Once more the French Government, even at the risk of disobliging Russia, proved loyal to the European Entente.

Roumania's policy remained rather sketchy, although the Roumanian Minister here, and the Roumanian Cabinet, did all they could to make their country "friends" with the Triple Entente. We had for some time received many expressions of their sympathy which had always been gratefully acknowledged. But on the 11th December the good Minister, M. Lahovary, had a little shamefacedly to tell me of a change. The Cabinet had been paralysed in their action by a reminder from Vienna of "old ties": it was a summons, and Roumania must come to heel.

The same day Sir Edward Grey said in the Commons that the forthcoming meeting of Ambassadors was only a preliminary and that the general conference would probably take place in Paris. He was anxious to show his entire consistency, and he took the opportunity of paying a tribute to our aims. Certainly no one could be more pacific than ourselves and the English, but what were Austria and Germany up to? Lahovary's uncomfortable news was contemporary with a letter from Jules Cambon, who said that our naval attaché confirmed everything he had heard about Austria's frame of mind. Cambon himself urged great prudence, and we thought things were a little easier as some reserve officers had come back to Vienna from their regiments, and the Statthalter of Galicia had told the people that there were no grounds for the unrest. But the unrest was very real: on either side of the frontier there was something like panic, and the peasants were selling their things for half their value to the Jews so as to raise what they could and get away.

"There may well be cracks in the Austro-Hungarian Empire," Cambon wrote, "which explains the frenzied talk about Serbia and the resentment against Germany, who seems to be hanging back. The other day the Union of Foreign Correspondents met at Berlin; the Russians and Austrians barely bowed to one another, and on leaving, the Austrians spoke wrathfully to the solitary Frenchman present, not of the Russians but of the Germans. They went so far as to say, 'We have made a mistake; where we

ought to look for friends is in Paris or London.' It is this sort of spirit which explains the different things we have seen; the Chancellor spoke as he did to the Reichstag simply as a reply to Vienna's emotions, and the *Cologne Gazette* gave prominence to this speech by a leading article which annoyed the Wilhelmstrasse. The renewal of the Triple Alliance which surprised my Italian and Austrian colleagues is due to the same thing; Austria evidently wanted its solidarity to be reaffirmed. Austria is therefore a thorn in the flesh of German policy just because she is so uncomfortable about herself. The Government here considers it the best thing to maintain peace, but it would be easy to stir up patriotic popular sentiments. The Pan-Germans are still in a minority, but a dangerous minority."

This was the Pan-German minority liable, as Col. Pellé had said, to become a permanent danger. Germany wanted to please Austria, Austria hated Serbia: there was much in 1912 to mine the ground under Europe's feet.

Meanwhile the Balkan delegates were making for London, some via Vienna and Berlin, some via Italy and France. On the 12th December Mme. Poincaré and I gave a breakfast to those who were passing through Paris. We only asked Briand, Klotz, Millerand, Delcassé, Stephen Pichon, Barthou, and one or two others; and in order not to give an official complexion to the party, we did not invite Sir Francis Bertie nor M. Isvolsky. By far the most impressive of our guests was M. Venizelos, the Greek Premier and Minister for War, whose prestige was such that he was already something of a legendary personage.

Born in Crete of a Greek father, he soon gave a taste of his political ability and oratorical gifts, and bore a fine part in Cretan revolts against the Turks. When Prince George of Greece was installed as High Commissioner of Crete, Venizelos was chosen as President of the Consultative Committee. But Prince and Councillor soon fell out: Venizelos, rifle in hand, fled to the mountains, rallied his followers, and defied the regular troops. The Powers promised reforms to the insurgents, Prince George resigned, and was replaced by Alexandre Zaïmis. The Cretans finally proclaimed their union with Greece; neither threats from the Powers, nor naval demonstrations, could dissuade

them. Venizelos was elected deputy, repaired to Athens, and rose to be President of the Council; he had been well forward in the recent events on the peninsula, but before the Great War was far from having satisfied his ambitions or fulfilled his destiny. I had much talk with him, and found him superintelligent, very subtle, and able to control or give play to his emotions as occasion demanded.

The Serb delegates were M. Novakovitch, former President of the Council, and M. Nikolitch. The former, a tall and powerful man, was a fine specimen of the Serb race; the latter, slender and supple, followed him like a shadow. The Montenegrin representation was of course in inverse ratio to the size of their country;—M. Miouchekovitch, Count Voisnovitch, M. Iovan Popovitch, all three obsessed with the desire to annex Scutari. No Bulgarian delegate had arrived. Stanciof was not yet demobilised, so I invited Nikyhoroff, the Chargé d'Affaires. Daneff, who had made a detour via Roumania, Austria and Germany, was at Berlin.

In conversation with the Greek, Serb and Montenegrin delegates I gathered that although the task of the Ambassadors would be no easy one, the tact and patience of Sir Edward and Paul Cambon would succeed in conciliating the various interests. But on 13th December came Rechad Pasha, the Turkish delegate introduced by Rifaat, with his: "We are the masters of the moment: we want peace, but will sign nothing but what falls in with our desires". Was this a fanfaronade or a fine contempt of moral principle? It was a bad omen, and at Berlin the Turkish delegate Nizamy Pasha, despite all remonstrances, talked in the same tone to Kiderlen. Kiderlen urged prudence on the Porte, and asked me to do likewise.[1] But would Kiderlen equally urge prudence on Vienna?—and if he did would Vienna pay any attention? From Sarajevo we heard of schools closed down to make way for troops. Was Austria afraid of a rising in Bosnia-Herzegovina, or was she arming to fight Serbia? Russia, and especially the Emperor, still hoped for peace.

[1] Telegram, Berlin, No. 491.

In Paris domestic politics receded into the background: a vote of confidence in the Government was passed by an immense majority, and I had my hands free to deal with the Balkans.

On the 15th Daneff, who had first gone to London and Berlin, came to Paris and breakfasted with me. As a lawyer I had been in close touch with him, and I invited M. Paléologue, who had known him as President of the Sobranje. Daneff, who was fully capable of looking after the interests of his country, denied that Bulgaria had any arrangement with the Triple Alliance: if Austria attacked Serbia she would support her ally, but somehow I felt that all was not well with the Balkan League, and Daneff, when pressed, exclaimed, "Adrianople must be ours: it is invested and bound to fall. Russia now sees that it can't be left to Turkey." "But what are we going to do about Roumania?" "Nothing; she twice refused to come in with us and has no right to anything." "But her neutrality favoured the victories of the Balkan States. Wouldn't Bulgaria be wise in the interests of peace to satisfy her neighbour?" With a blend of flattery and evasion he retorted, "One might imagine you lived among us to hear you speaking of the Dobrudja, Thrace, Macedonia and Albania! A different thing to Count Berchtold! He seems never to have looked at the map of the Balkans!" With this Daneff switched off to something else without any promise as to Roumania.[1]

The next day, 16th December, the Peace Conference assembled in London under presidency of Sir Edward Grey, and after the usual courtesies Grey convoked the Ambassadors of the two groups of Powers.

Paul Cambon had general instructions: an Albania bounded by the Drin up to its confluence with the White Drin, then to the east along the latter river and the left bank of Lake Ochrida, and on the south by a line drawn on Delvine and the Adriatic: this region to have entire administrative and political autonomy under collective guarantee of the Powers; the maintenance of the *status quo* for Constantinople

[1] Despatch, Paris-London; Telegram, Paris-London.

and region ; Salonica and Adrianople for Greece and Bulgaria ; no change if possible in the régime of the Narrows, but if, despite us, the question of opening the Straits be raised, Russia to be supported so far as possible without offending England ; Roumania to say what she wanted, but not to share in the deliberations, as the Balkan States themselves were not doing so ; Crete to go to Greece with the other Ægean islands, except possibly Thasos, which Bulgaria claimed, Chios and Mytilene, if the other Powers were determined to leave them to Turkey, and Lemnos and Tenedos, which with their nearness to the Dardanelles might be neutralised under Greek suzerainty ; establishment of Salonica as a " free " port should Austria insist on it, with special railway rates and tariffs, but no other economic privileges ; financial questions, in particular those relating to the Ottoman Debt, to be submitted to a technical commission in Paris, with representatives from all Powers.

I told Cambon that, above all, he must avoid a split in the Balkan League which would be fatal.[1] As regards the Adriatic Port, the Government held fast to the line already taken.

Information came, " very secret ", that the three Powers of the Triple Alliance sent identical instructions to their Ambassadors in London : it was not the Triple Entente which stressed the separation between the two groups, it was the Triple Alliance.[2]

With the Austro-German *bloc*, Serbia must lodge her demand with the Great Powers, to whom the Balkan Allies left the onus of tracing the Albanian frontier : this was all right if the Great Powers were as ready to compose their differences as the little ones, and had enough weight to enforce their combined authority. Grey had already warned the Serbian Chargé d'Affaires that if the Ambassadors guaranteed commercial access to the Adriatic for his country, he would be wise to accept it.

The two conferences at London, the Ambassadors and

[1] Despatch, Paris-London, No. 1287, Telegram No.1024.
[2] Despatch, Paris-London, 17th December, No. 1022.

the Peace Delegates, met separately, the latter going very slowly to work, and really waiting on the other.[1]

After the Turks had demanded, and been refused, the revictualling of Adrianople the Ambassadors had to tackle two bones of contention: the Serb port, and autonomous Albania. Eventually, on 20th December a formula was hit upon.

"Autonomous Albania guaranteed and controlled by the six Great Powers under sovereignty or suzerainty of the Sultan: commercial access for Serbia to an Albanian port, free and neutralised under an international force, with liberty of transit and freedom of customs for all goods, even including munitions of war."

But despite this entente, for which Serbia was to pay the chief price, Austria went ahead with her armaments, and Cambon had to speak to Sir Edward. England and France, in urging Russia to pacify Belgrade, had done their duty, and Russia had done more than hers in chancing the loss of Serbian sympathy by advising Serbia to draw in her horns. Austria surely had no longer any reason so to arm herself as to make Europe uneasy. Could not Sir Edward say a word at Vienna?

Sir Edward thought Berchtold might perfectly well say the situation was "cleared up", and Mensdorff, to whom he had already spoken, had murmured something about "guarantees". But it was necessary to be more explicit; a question of economic guarantees was no excuse for a mobilisation. Sir Edward again pressed Mensdorff as to some reassuring pronouncement.[2] If Austria, to obtain a commercial treaty, threatened or sent an ultimatum to Serbia, she would create a very serious situation. Grey advised Berlin of this conversation, saying the Marquis di

[1] "... For about eight months (Sir Edward Grey) contributed largely by goodwill and preponderating influence to bring the parties into accord. Instead of taking an analogous standpoint we (the Germans) merely stuck to the thesis handed to us by Vienna. Count Mensdorff, the Austrian Ambassador, 'ran' the Triple Alliance at London, I was his second. ... At Berlin it was Count Szogenyi who managed affairs, always singing the refrain *casus foederis*."—Prince Lichnowsky.

[2] Telegram, Paul Cambon, Nos. 415-416.

San Giuliano was with us, but when I reminded Count Szecsen[1] that Europe had brought Serbia to a submissive frame of mind, he retorted that his Government had received assurances from Europe but none from Serbia; the reply was obvious: "She has addressed them to Europe, of which you are part".

One question settled, another sprang up with Scutari. Austria vetoed point-blank the demands of Montenegro: having squeezed the Serbs, she meant to wring something out of Montenegro. But Russia had no stomach to tackle King Nicholas: Italy agreed with her, and Sir Edward thought Austria should give way, which she declined to do.

Russia throughout rattled no sword in the scabbard. Sazonoff never ceased to repeat that, on his advice, Russia would never make war save in her own really *vital* interests, and there was no more idea of a Russian intervention to bolster up Slav Powers in the Balkans. Russia had given them their independence, and her mission was over: she was not going to be carried by sentiment. Sazonoff's straight answer when asked what he meant by a war in Russian interests was: "We should not allow a change in the *status quo* of the Narrows; there we must have either the Turks or ourselves". As to a hypothetical Austro-Hungarian intervention in the Balkans, Louis reminded us that Sazonoff had never entirely shown his hand. It was likely Russia would keep quiet at first and let her rival commit her forces as much as possible.[2] "Be sure," added Louis, "in any case that Nicholas II. will not do less than did his predecessors. Russia declares her mission is done, but she would start again if any one menaced the independence of the Balkan States."

Where then was the menace to peace? Russia, who herself barred Serbia's access to the sea, or Austria, who wanted to squeeze the peoples who dwelt near her frontiers?

[1] Telegram, Paris-London, 20th December, No. 1036.

[2] Our military attaché: "It is believed Russia will not go to war even if Austria attacks Serbia."

CHAPTER XXVI

Declarations to the Deputies and Senate—Government's foreign policy unanimously approved—Concessions made to Austria—Questions of Adrianople and Scutari—End of the year.

JUST now French opinion was a little fluttered by contradictory news from London, and I promised to give both Chambers before the end of the special session an exposé of our doings and dealings. Some little excess of zeal on the part of one or two English officials in Egypt had given rise to rumours of a British move in Syria, where most of the inhabitants looked to France for protection. Any fear of English interference was wholly unfounded. On the 5th December Sir Edward Grey said to Paul Cambon, " We have no intention of doing anything whatever in Syria, where we have neither aspirations nor designs," a phrase which the Secretary of State willingly allowed me to quote to Parliament. I sent him a copy of what I proposed to say as regards Syria and the Entente Cordiale, and on the 21st took the occasion of the 1913 Budget to address both Houses. I began with the Balkans, and the traditional French policy of the *status quo* in the Near East ; the sense of dangers arising from a possible breach of this had led to Balkan problems being shelved rather than solved, while the growth of national feeling, faulty Turkish administration, failure to execute promised reforms, and disorders in Macedonia, had rendered complications inevitable. I dwelt upon our joint efforts with Russia to arrange a settlement ; had we been fully informed as to the Balkan Alliance, we should have striven to fend off a bloody struggle. We could foresee the danger of a great conflagration sufficiently to cause us to press Turkey to make peace with Italy and give reforms

to Macedonia. As regards the Entente I could recall how day by day we had sought to keep close touch between England and France, and France's faithful ally Russia, and that all three should make for a general concert of the Powers of Europe; as to England I could truthfully say that our relations with her had never been closer nor more intimate

"Il est superflu, je pense, de répéter que nous avons considéré comme un devoir élémentaire de témoigner à notre allié une fidélité effective. . . . Quant à l'Angleterre, nos relations avec elle n'ont jamais été plus confiantes et plus étroites. Une partie de l'opinion française a paru craindre, en certaines circonstances, que le gouvernement britannique, dans ses rapports avec d'autres puissances, ne poursuivît une politique que ne fût pas en parfaite conformité avec la nôtre. La loyauté du gouvernement anglais ne me permettait, certes pas, de partager ces appréhensions. Sir Edward Grey n'en a pas moins tenu à nous déclarer spontanément qu'elles n'avaient rien de fondé et qu'il était, aussi fortement que nous, attaché à la sincérité de l'Entente franco-anglaise."

I was outspoken as to the necessity of the European Concert, and thought fit to give a veiled warning to the Balkan States. They must realise their new united power, and the young kingdoms must not compromise, by squabbles, what their armies with equal valour had secured: should the Balkan States fail to make peace with Turkey, Europe would have to intervene, and France would be forward in any peace move by the Powers. The Chamber had no wish to prolong the debate, and rather cold-shouldered a deputy who rose with a eulogy of Austrian policy on his lips. We shall meet this deputy again in the course of certain financial intrigues, and in transactions in which he was strangely engaged during the war. Édouard Vaillant and Jaurès spoke no word for the Socialists against our foreign policy, the former urging me to continue my pacific metiér, while Jaurès gratefully remembered that "M. le Président du Conseil from the outset of the crisis took the initiative in European conversations which have localised the war and taken shape in the Ambassadors' Conference".

In the Chamber from Right to Extreme Left there was

no dissentient note, and in the Senate I went on to say: "This union of the Balkan peoples is the realisation of what they have long dreamt of. The same thought which inspired in 1844 the patriot Ilia Garaschanine and later men like Lamartine, Michelet, Victor Hugo and Gambetta has now penetrated deep the inner feelings of the Balkan peoples themselves, and has impelled them to spontaneous enterprise in the cause of justice and liberty. France would be untrue to her traditional generosity if she did not regard with entire sympathy the great work of these growing nations. That Balkan territory should henceforth belong to the Balkan peoples, Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians, is the most logical and the most equitable solution of a problem and one which offers the best guarantee for future stability. The Conference of Ambassadors in London must surely see that this point of view is adopted by all the Powers. After the victories of the allies Turkey will find herself shorn of a large portion of her European territory, but she will still enjoy a very considerable, and a very flourishing, dominion in Asia, where it will only depend on herself to exercise her authority in the interests of progress and civilisation. If she is well advised it is in this direction that she will address her efforts and her hopes for the future, and it will be easy for her to remain on friendly terms with the Powers of Europe, and more especially with France. To ward off all future internal difficulties Turkey will do well to lend a favourable ear to the wishes of populations who are subject to her. For some time our Ambassador at Constantinople, like the representatives of other Powers, has pressed on the Porte proposals for reform in favour of the Lebanese, but so far much has been said and nothing done. But it is needless to tell the Senate that in Lebanon and in Syria we have special and long-seated interests which we must see are respected. The British Government in the most friendly manner has declared that in that part of the world it has no political aspirations and no wish or intention to do anything. For ourselves we are fully determined to maintain the integrity of the Ottoman Empire in Asia; but we shall not abandon there any of our traditions, nor suffer any injury to our interests."

One could not but be pleased with all the encouragement one received, but the work was very far from finished, and probably the most difficult part was to come. The Balkan people had gained their independence; it remained to allot them their territory. The success of the Allies had for its set-off some secret rivalries, some Austrian ill-temper, and the stubbornness of the Porte. If the Ambassadors had been able to agree, this was to be attributed in some degree to their passing over, with Austria in the corner of their eye, some really reasonable Serbian claims. In many quarters our concessions were thought to have been excessive.

"Once more", M. Jacques Bainville wrote on the 23rd December, "the Austro-German *bloc* has imposed its will on Europe. William II. no longer says his famous 'sic jubeo' to an Empire, he preaches it to the whole world. Germany and Austria have triumphed just as they did at Tangier, at Agadir, and in the annexation of Bosnia. At the London conference the representatives of the Triple Entente have merely registered the wishes of the Triple Alliance. . . . The Austrian Ambassador is said to have come to the meeting with a serviceable stick in his hand which his German colleague told him he might use."

Vienna also was jubilant. Dumaine wrote to me:

"The result of the early meetings of the Ambassadors in London is considered here as a complete Austro-Hungarian score: all the newspapers say that the ideas adopted by the representatives of the great Powers are precisely what the Dual Monarchy put forward."

From St. Petersburg, on the other hand, Louis telegraphed to me:

"The Nationalist newspapers attack Russian policy and, generally speaking, that of the Triple Entente with regard to the Ambassadors' Conference. The *Swiet* has an article 'worse than Tsouchima,' and the *Novoie Vremia* has headlines, 'a diplomatic Mukden' and 'London's defeat'."

One wondered if what we had done in the way of conciliation would have for its reward the settled peace we longed for? It did not look much like it. On the 21st December Rifaat Pasha came to the Quai D'Orsay and said

to Paléologue : " It is impossible for the Ottoman Government to give up Adrianople ; at least a third of the population there is Turkish. Before we took Constantinople, Adrianople was our capital and Selim's Mosque contains some of our most cherished tombs. The war in itself was not so one-sided as to deprive us of the rights of keeping a town which the Bulgarians had not been able to take, and which is for us full of honoured memories." " But," Paléologue protested, " the Bulgarian Government seems determined to take up arms again unless they get Adrianople, and this might mean the collapse of the Turkish Empire not only in Europe, but in Asia." " Never mind," Rifaat retorted, " you must ask M. Poincaré if he will not insist on Bulgaria giving up her claim to the town." It was all very well to ask me to insist, but the Powers had no idea of letting Turkey have any illusions, and Germany and Austria had already said the Ottoman Government must admit they had been beaten and give up Adrianople. The Porte, which had reckoned on Vienna's favourable consideration, was bitterly disappointed, but the Turks wanted anyhow to exonerate themselves from all responsibility. They suggested that the Ambassador's Conference should collectively and imperatively address them, after which an extraordinary council of Turkish statesmen could be held, and the Ottoman Government could bow to authority. But while Germany, Austria and France were remonstrating with Turkey in kindly tones, Russia again " put her foot into it ". According to Bompard, the Russian Ambassador at Constantinople told the Foreign Minister that the stubbornness of the Ottoman Government about Adrianople, Scutari and Janina was likely to prevent the conclusion of peace, and that if the negotiations in London broke down or were suspended, Russia would be unable to restrain any longer the expressions of popular feeling, and thus her neutrality could no longer be guaranteed.

As soon as I heard this, I complained to Isvolsky of the liberties which Russia was taking with the Alliance. " M. Bompard is mistaken," Isvolsky said to me ; " we have simply told Turkey that if she is obstinate as to

these places and as to the frontier south of Adrianople, the Allies will not sign peace, hostilities will break out again, and our neutrality cannot be certified, for troubles would certainly occur in Asia Minor and all round there, which would oblige us to do our best to protect ourselves against anything like an invasion of the Kurds." My only answer to this rather stumbling explanation was that Russia had no right to speak to Turkey as she had done without our consent; M. Isvolsky took his eyeglass out of his eye, put it back again, and sealed his lips. Then he showed me a telegram just to hand from Sazonoff, who spoke of a conversation with the Austrian Ambassador. He had told him that, now everything was settled about the Serbian port in Albania, if Austria pushed on with her armaments it could only be considered as a threat to Russia, who in her turn would have to strengthen her army. The Ambassador suggested that Russia might dismiss the military class which had been kept with the colours for two months longer than it ought to have been, a suggestion which Sazonoff promised to submit to the War Minister as a pendant to Austria arresting her military preparations. I sent all our Ambassadors this bit of information, and Louis wrote that Count de Thurn thought Austria would reduce little by little her "effectives", but that as Scutari was peopled by Albanians, Vienna could not consent to it being handed over to Montenegro. The Viennese Press was also very vocal against Montenegro, and M. Aynard telegraphed to me from Cettinje that Austria perhaps wanted to let King Nicholas know that he could not look to her with regard to Scutari, and thus force him to make some local concession. Austria might also wish to hint to the King that it would not be so much a question of getting Scutari as of losing his crown if he did not lean on Vienna.

"I don't know when a year has ended so badly," said Jules Cambon, who had come to Paris on short leave. "At Berlin up to now they are keeping quiet, but they think that Austria is walking towards a precipice, and the fear of this is not without its own danger." Count Berchtold, questioned by M. de Giers, said that in a week or a fortnight

Austro-Hungary would have the guarantees which she required, and would then recall her troops from Gallicia and reduce her men with the colours. The loyalty of the Serbs, he said, was more than suspect, and they might be at their games again if pressure on them was eased. He wound up with an affable assurance that as soon as matters were definitely settled, Russia would see how close and cordial would become her relations with Austria-Hungary.

M. de Giers only expressed the fear that these incidents would leave a very bitter taste in the mouth for some years to come.

On Christmas day Vienna gave St. Petersburg an *aide-mémoire*, in which Berchtold expressed the wish to take advantage of the pause in the London deliberations in order to make clear certain points still under discussion, and to try and arrive at an understanding.

As to the international character of the future railway to the Adriatic, the line, according to the Vienna Cabinet, ought to be guarded by Albanian police, and the railway must be available for all the Powers as well as for Serbia: but war material must only be carried in time of peace. Moreover, so spake Vienna, it was of paramount importance that Scutari should belong altogether to Albania. Austria was the protectress of the Catholics, and Scutari was at once the religious headquarters of the Albanians, and absolutely necessary as a centre for administration. The memorandum, after alluding to the inability of Montenegro to take Scutari, wound up with—"the Austro-Hungarian monarchy has a vital interest in the creation of a really durable Albania, and this would be compromised by the loss of Scutari; the interests of Russia in Montenegro are restricted to the upkeep of the Njegus dynasty, and Austria is ready to co-operate with Russia in preserving the crown of King Nicholas".

Happily, here again Russia did nothing which could not be repaired, and she was clever in telling Montenegro that, as to Scutari, before it could be politically regularised it must be militarily apportioned.

At Berlin Kiderlen airily told the Italian Ambassador that Scutari was of no interest to Germany, who only wanted to see Austria and Italy agree about it. But Scutari was not the only town in dispute, for at the Turko-Balkan conference the Serbian delegate said that his country would never allow Pritzrend, Diakovo or Ypek to form part of a prospective Albania.

In the thick of these difficulties the Balkan delegates, on the 28th December, heard the answer of the Ottoman Government. The Balkan States asked Turkey to give up her European possessions west of a line drawn through Midia-Rodosto-Gallipoli and all the islands, including Crete. Turkey clung to Adrianople.[1] At the meeting of the Peace Conference on the 28th she refused point-blank to surrender territory, and made four ridiculous counter-proposals. She must keep Adrianople and its district; Macedonia was to be an autonomous principality under Turkish suzerainty and the sovereignty of a Christian, preferably Protestant, Prince; Albania would also become an autonomous state under Turkish suzerainty and the rule of a Mussulman Prince; Turkey was to retain the islands, which she asserted were a protection to her Asiatic possessions; and Crete was to be a matter between the Porte and the Great Powers, with which the Balkans had no concern. The Balkan Allies were a little staggered by this truculent reply, but did not break off negotiations, and asked for new proposals by the 30th. On that day Rechad Pasha declared that his new instructions were partially indecipherable, but so far as he could read them, the Ottoman Government wished to disconnect the questions: such matters of international interest as the Sanjak of Novi Bazaar, the isles, and Albania, should really be left to the Great Powers for consideration; while Adrianople, for instance, could be discussed by Turkey and Bulgaria, who alone were interested. But this meant the rupture of the conference! cried the Balkan delegates. "By no means," blandly answered Rechad; "there are plenty of other things to talk over besides territory."

[1] Telegram, Bompard, 27th December, No. 707.

The Turkish delegation now tried to sow discord among the Allies, and had a fair chance of doing it. The Greeks wondered if the Bulgars had not secretly proposed a *tête-à-tête* to the Turks. Daneff, while declining to meet his allies except at the conference, had had numerous interviews with the Ottoman delegates, which roused the suspicions of the perspicacious Venizelos.

On the 30th December, Szecsen mentioned to me that the Press read into my speech before the Chamber that Austria's consent to an Albanian, neutralised, port for Serbia was unconditional, whereas it was conditional upon a general entente in all points at issue. The answer was fairly obvious : if there were no general entente each Power resumed entire liberty of action. Szecsen was as pleasant as usual, even when I remarked upon the uneasiness caused in France by the extraordinary armaments of his country. " Austria ", he tried to explain, " has much to complain of Serbia, whose military authorities in the occupied territory are guilty of all kinds of excesses : if Austria reduced her armaments the Serb Government itself couldn't curb its troops." Yes, was my reply, but if you don't disarm, Russia, who is about to dismiss her conscript class, will be unable to do so, which will be very troublesome to Europe. I am speaking to you as man to man, not as Prime Minister to Ambassador, but I simply must point out to you the danger inherent in the prolongation of a military display.

In the last hours of this year there came a slight relaxation for our strained nerves; a telegram from Buda-Pesth told us that the Austro-Hungarian Government had cancelled a large order for cartridges which they had placed with Manfred Weiss ; from Berlin came a cheerful story that the Russian War Minister had breakfasted at the Palace with the Prussian War Minister, and that not a word of politics had been spoken : the *Lokalanzeiger* was even inspired to say that the visit of the Russian general had no political meaning, but gave clear proof of the excellent relations between the two Courts, and that Russia was happy in her mind about European peace. One could only hope that the forecast of the *Lokalanzeiger* and of the Russian Government might be

verified, that the pourparlers in London might smooth away the Balkan troubles, and that 1913 might be less vexed than 1912. One could only be thankful that the Balkan War—which all our efforts were powerless to prevent—had not spread, and that there was no break in the European Entente, to the creation of which France had so largely contributed. The Government of the Republic, which in these last months had tightened up its friendships and alliances, could say that at the same time it had done good service to the cause of humanity.

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